

PLAYS AND POEMS

ALBERT E. DRINKWATER.

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BY

ALBERT E. DRINKWATER.



GRIFFITH, FARRAN, OKEDEN & WELSH

(SUCCESSORS TO NEWBERY AND HARRIS)

WEST CORNER ST PAUL'S CHURCHYARD, LONDON

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## CONTENTS.

	PAGE
TRIED BY FIRE. A PLAY IN THREE ACTS . . . . .	1
SIR JASPER'S VOW. A PLAY IN THREE ACTS . . . . .	39
A FAIR CONQUEST. A DRAMATIC EPISODE IN ONE ACT . . . . .	95
—	
THE LADY AND THE KNIGHT . . . . .	115
TO WINTER . . . . .	129
THE PENITENT . . . . .	131
AN OLD MAN'S RETROSPECT . . . . .	133
THE MISTLETOE BOUGH . . . . .	134
HOPE . . . . .	136
SONG . . . . .	137
SONG . . . . .	138
THE SQUIRE'S HEIR . . . . .	139
TO MY MOTHER . . . . .	146
TO OLD MAIDS . . . . .	147
TO G * * * * C * * * * . . . . .	148
TO E * * * * C * * * * . . . . .	149
TO KING HUMBERT . . . . .	150



Tried by Fire.

CHARACTERS.

CAPTAIN CECIL MACKENZIE.

PHILIP ASHTON.

CORPORAL WILLIAMS.

SAM JOYCE.

HARRY DALES.

GEORGE ZALEY.

RUTH ASHTON.

MABEL BOND.

ALICE PETHER.

MAID.

*Act I.—In London.*

*Acts II. and III.—The Blacksmith's forge at Deliston in Dorset.*

*Time—The Present.*

*Six years are supposed to elapse between Acts I. and II.*

ACT I. SCENE I.

SCENE.—*In the suburbs of London. Morning-room in Philip Ashton's house, neatly but modestly furnished. Breakfast finished on the table. Entrance at back leading into garden; also entrances R. and L.*

RUTH ASHTON *discovered sitting at table.*

MAID *enters as the curtain rises, carrying letters, which she hands to her mistress.*

RUTH. Where is your master?

MAID. I think he's in the garden, m'm.

[*Exit MAID. She carries with her some of the things from the breakfast-table.*]

RUTH [*looking at letters*]. Three, only three! And to-day's my birthday. [*She takes letters one by one in her hand.*] From dear old Margaret, my nurse of twenty years ago, and ever since my counsellor. From dear, careless, happy, loyal Mabel, bright and heedless as the birchen shadows in the summer breeze,—true and constant as the sun that makes them,—you will be your playmate's friend though all the world reject her. From Cecil, good, generous Cecil. Had I been Mrs Cecil Mackenzie, as he would have had

me be, the postman would have had a heavier load to-day. Cecil Mackenzie, Royal Engineers, with his thousands, is one thing, and Philip Ashton, poet, with nothing more than he may chance to earn, is another. Poor Cecil, I always loved you, and I love you still, but not as a woman loves the man she weds; and yet I wish you had not written this to-day. Yes, Philip, you have one fault; you are very, very jealous. Not a line from my mother! I thought she would send me just a word to-day. [*Dries tears, and takes from her pocket small parcel; reads*] "For my darling, with Philip's love." [*Takes out silver bracelet, which she puts on; kisses it as she goes towards door C.*]

*Enter* PHILIP ASHTON.

[*He has fresh-cut roses in his hand, some of which he fastens in Ruth's dress as he meets her.*]

PHIL. Your birthday will be very lonely, Ruth.

RUTH. Till you come back.

PHIL. Letters for me?

RUTH. Two [*gives them to him from table*].

PHIL. [*opening them*]. From Dane & Dane, the publishers. The old tale! But it's all right; it's only a matter of business after all. From the editor of the Bi-monthly: "The editor presents his compliments, and regrets he cannot avail himself"—and so on, as usual.

RUTH. Never mind, dear; we are quite inde-

pendent of them all for some time to come. Besides, if you often have disappointments, you sometimes have your triumphs, too.

PHIL. Yes, as long as my present work lasts, which will be for some few months, at least. We can defy starvation with six pounds a week. Any letter from your old home, Ruth?

RUTH. No.

PHIL. No letter from your mother?  
And nature hath, forsooth, no stronger bond  
Or more enduring than a mother's love.  
Love that can pass the day unnoted by,  
When greetings are in common kindness due  
From merest friends; and she forgets her child.  
Or do I wrong her, Ruth?—and wrong you both?  
And have not I by my deliberate act  
Hewn out a gulf betwixt your world and you?  
Borne off by force 'gainst their express command  
My heart's sweet idol from her native air,  
The homes where wealth and luxury abound,  
And set her, lonely, in the desert wastes  
Of poverty?—who knows, of want? Oh! love  
Is little more than selfish at the best.  
Nay, tell me, Ruth, come there no thoughts to you  
That are regrets? Do you not sometimes think  
Upon the world you left to be my wife,  
When sound of welcome rang in every voice  
That used to greet you there, contrasting it

With this poor cottage and the dozen friends  
Who gladden it, and long for days gone by  
When they who once did homage at your smile  
Pass by disdainful, whispering contempt?

RUTH. Yes, Philip dear, I have one great regret,  
That you so ill should read a woman's heart,  
As not to know that, though a haughty world  
Should banish her, if still she reign supreme  
O'er one loyal subject that with constant faith  
Still offers all the homage of his heart  
And looks, with pure truth-lustre in his eyes,  
To say, "Sweet wife with thee I'm all content ;"  
She still hath realms so wide to call her own,  
So full of beauty that grows never old ;  
That what she hath not weighed with what she hath  
So wrests the balance that it's poised upon,  
The scale whereon that other world is laid  
And all it bears goes upward out of sight,  
Beyond the reach of memory or regret.

PHIL. Forgive me, Ruth, I do so prize your peace  
That, as a man who store of treasure bears  
Oft puts his hand to feel his treasure safe,  
And looks around to know no traitor near,  
So I, in trembling sprung from anxious care,  
Needs sometimes stop to know your peace secure ;  
And then I think, dear, on what once you were,  
The darling daughter of a rich great house ;  
And what you are, a fameless poor man's wife ;



And then I think, too, of the brilliant life  
That had been yours had you become his wife  
Who sought your hand ere I. If ever, Ruth,  
I lived to learn you wished it had been so,  
I'd —

RUTH. Come Philip, this is wild.—To-day's  
My birthday, sir. Come early back to me  
And you shall learn I am so well content  
That you yourself shall never wish me more.

PHIL. My darling Ruth, I will be early back.

[*Exit* PHILIP ASHTON.]

RUTH. Dear, dear Philip! who would not leave  
a world of flattering seeming friends to live with  
you? [*She sits down to letters, reading MABEL'S.*]  
“I send no birthday greetings here. . . . I mean to  
bring them. I shall come to-night.” [*Reading*  
MARGARET'S.] “Your mother's lying ill—you should  
come whether she says yes or no, and see her.”  
[*Pause, reading CECIL'S.*] “I know that I may risk  
your anger if I come myself; but I would rather risk  
that now than hereafter your reproach. [*Turns over.*]  
What I have to say involves my peace; and what is far,  
far more to me, your own. But I know you too well  
of old to fear I shall not win an easy victory.—Yours  
ever, CECIL MACKENZIE.” He coming here! He  
cannot, surely will not be so unreasoning! Neither  
I nor Philip have seen him since we were married;  
and if he found him here, there are no extremes to

which his wild impassioned nature might not reach. [*Reads letter again.*] What can these words mean? [*Terrified at the possible meaning of the last words of letter.*] Oh no, he cannot come for that! He cannot come to take away the peace of my dear little home when all without have banished me! He could not be so ungenerous, so unmanly! I will not see him. [*Takes paper and writes hurriedly in pencil. Rings bell.*]

*Enter MAID.*

RUTH. Should a gentleman, Captain Mackenzie, enquire for me to-day, say I cannot see him. Give him this. [*Gives note to MAID.*]

*Exit MAID.*

RUTH. Why should he come on this day of all days? Oh, it is cruel. I did respect him; thought him good and noble. Can he have so strangely changed?

*Enter CECIL MACKENZIE.*

[*He gently puts aside the MAID who comes with him as if to prevent him; he shuts the door; Ruth goes to other side of the room.*]

CECIL [*holding out his hand to her*]. Ruth, Mrs Ashton! Is this your greeting? How have I deserved this?

RUTH. Why do you write this letter? Why come here to throw a shadow on the sunshine of my home?

CECIL. Oh, you misunderstand me; and had I

listened to your servant, I should have been turned from your door with your hard thoughts of me still unexplained away. Ruth! I come to spoil no sunshine in your home. God knows, I'd spare nor time nor pains to make one ray that falls there brighter. Give me your hand. I have no words to speak to you I would not say as freely with your husband by to listen. You trust me, do you not?

RUTH. Yes, Cecil, I do. To look upon your face again is to know that no dishonour lurks in the heart within.

CECIL. Sit down. I have some news for you. [*They sit.*] Your mother is ill.

RUTH. I know it. I had a letter from Margaret this morning to tell me so.

CECIL. She sent for me last night. She is growing worse. She can scarcely live through many days.

RUTH. Did she speak of me?

CECIL. With all the old prejudices as strong as ever. I told her of the life-long misery I knew would follow if you should learn that she had died and you unreconciled. She has consented to see you on condition that you come with me.

RUTH. With you?

CECIL. Yes. But surely that need make no difficulty. This has been to me, Ruth, a sacred duty which I could not but discharge. You will come? Your mother, when she had once consented, grew

anxious and impatient for your coming. It will make her end happier and your life more blest. You must come with me to-morrow. I will call and fetch you. Tell your husband I have been here and why I came. I would have him, if he will, come too, that if, as I have some hope, we can persuade her so, you may stand together at your mother's side and hear her bless you before she dies. If he will not come, you will?

RUTH. Yes.

CECIL. That is all my errand to you. The rest is to your husband. Give him this. [*Gives letter.*] It is from one of my old friends, who wants collected for publication a series of Ballads of the British Arms. This is to ask your husband to collect and edit them. He can make his own terms. Good-bye! To-morrow at two. You will be ready?

RUTH. Cecil, how I wronged you! You came with more than all the kindness of a friend, and I could think you came but to betray!

CECIL. I can forgive you anything, if only you believe me still your friend—a friend who holds your happiness the first care in the world.

RUTH. I do believe it.

CECIL. And these two foolish letters, mine that you so strangely could misread [*she gives it to him*], and yours you wrote when you still thought so ill of me, burn them, Ruth [*throws them on table*], and with them destroy for ever the unworthy thought that

a man who truly loves—and I nor fear nor shame to say I love you still—could ever have a wish to mar the home of her he loves.

RUTH. Dear Cecil, may heaven reward you for your unselfish love. [CECIL *has taken up his hat.*] I will go with you to the hill.

[*Exeunt RUTH ASHTON and CECIL MACKENZIE by garden.*]

*Enter PHILIP ASHTON.*

PHIL. More fortunate than I hoped. When yesternight I sat late at work, Ruth thought I was busy as usual on some poor creation of my brain. She little dreamed that I was only toiling at the dull routine work of to-day that I might be free to spend her birthday with her. How pleased and how surprised she'll be. I wonder where she is! [*He has taken off his gloves; goes to table, sees letters; puts his gloves on table.*] Ruth's writing! [*Turns it over and reads*] "Once I held your happiness dear to me. Believe me I do so still. But it cannot, shall not, come between me and my true love! 'Tis best for both that we should part.—RUTH." [PHILIP *bewildered reads it again.*] Great God! is this my Ruth? [*Takes up letter from CECIL and reads the last part of it.*] "What I have to say involves my peace, and what is far, far more to me, your own. But I know you too well of old to fear I shall not win an easy

victory.—Yours always, CECIL MACKENZIE.” [PHILIP rings bell on table.]

*Enter MAID.*

PHIL. Who has been here to-day?

MAID. Captain Mackenzie, sir. My mistress has gone out with him. [*Exit MAID.*]

PHIL. Is this the woman who an hour ago,  
In all the semblance of a constant truth,  
Hung listening on my neck, whose eyes looked love,  
And lips broke forth in praise of sweet content?  
Oh thrice accursed witcher of the world,  
That wears an angel face and bears about,  
Beneath a bosom all so falsely fair,  
A heart so black with venom of deceit!  
“’Tis best that we should part,” ’shalt have thy will.  
[*Sits and writes across Ruth’s letter; gets up.*]  
So fades away my little dream of life,  
’Tis best that we should part.

God grant it be for ever!

[*Exit PHILIP ASHTON. A moment’s pause, then at the other door.*]

*Enter RUTH ASHTON.*

[*She looks very bright and happy; goes to table; sees PHILIP’S gloves; stops in wonder; picks up letter across which PHILIP has written, and which he has left on table; turning it round sees his writing; for a moment is lost in wonder; moves towards window as if to look out;*

*comes back to table and rings bell sharply ; goes up to window, leans faint against curtain which she is holding ; MAID opens door and looks at her in surprise.*

*Quick Curtain.*

ACT II. SCENE I.

SCENE.—*A blacksmith's forge at Deliston in Dorset. Entrances to road, shoeing shed, and house. Winter.*

SAM JOYCE, HARRY DALES, and GEORGE ZALEY discovered. SAM at work.

HARRY. How did'st get hwome from t'club last night, Sam?

SAM. A' right, lad. I come wi' Wilford an' t'other chaps from t'Grange.

GEORGE. What meäde Walter goo off so sudden, Sam?

SAM. Sudden? What d'ye mean? Er warn't hwome much avore t'rest.

HARRY. Then er ought'er ben ; er left best part o' two hours avore 'twas over. I can tell 'ee what 'twas, Garge. He went when Wilford sing'd 'is song. D'yer mind t'Squire's harvest hwome t'year avore last, Garge? Wilford sing'd t'same song then; and Walter went out in t'middle on't, just as er did last night.

SAM. Yer quite right ; so er did.

GEORGE. Yer mean that song about t'miller's wife as left un all along o' some young sojer chap. It do



meäke yer wince a bit ; er sings it so quiet and so plaintive like.

HARRY. This night after t'harvest hwome, when I come back across t'vealds an hour arter, I come upon Walter leanin' on a geäte, talkin' to hisself an' blubberin' like a child. I reckon they're middlin' right as thinks he's three parts crazy.

SAM. May be they are ; but there's no better man to work along side on through Deliston ; an' since he's bin in t'village, six year come Middlemas, there's n'ar a one of us but what a found 'im a right good chap. I'd as soon trust Walter Wane as t'Squire hissel'.

*Enter* ALICE PETHER.

ALICE. Come, lads, what art loiterin' here for? Once you chaps gits gossipin' together there aren't no tellin' when yer'll stop. Hast done my vender, Sam? No, I warrant yer ; main little work done while yer chatterin' so.

SAM. Done all but, Mrs Pether ; ready in viv minit.

ALICE. Now, what was you lads gossipin' about? Pretty tales go round, I warrant, when the likes o' you lays yer 'eds together.

HARRY. We warn't sayin' no 'arm o' nobody. I was tellin' o' Walter Wane, an' 'ow I see 'im t'night o' Squire's harvest hwome ; an' 'ow er went off when Wilford sing'd 'is song. Er went off just t'same way last night.

ALICE. There aren't no call for you to trouble yersel's 'bout Walter Wane; if er comes an' goes to yer meetin's as er chooses, that aren't no concern o' yourn. Why, bless yer, Walter Wane's got more sinse in 'im than all o' yer put together; an' I tell yer what it is, he's a main deal too good to assort wi' the likes o' us. When he lay sick they dree weeks, two years ago, and I 'ad the carin' for un and used to nurse un, I see a deal o' Walter Wane. Why when he'd bin shut of 'is work a time, an' 'ad got the grime out of 'is 'ands an' 'is vace, he looked, for all 'is common clothes, more as tho' he wer t'village squire nor t'village blacksmith; an' bless yer 'earts, the books he used to read. I ain't no scholard, lads; but I know them books 'ud need a deal o' larnin' to mak' 'em out.

HARRY. Ye're right there, missis, I do think. I've 'eärd 'im talkin' wi' t'parson as if he was as larned as 'isself.

GEORGE. So 'e do, Harry, so 'e do. I've 'eärd 'im myself.

SAM. Ah, yer should see 'im settle off 'is calculatin' in the way o' business; why he rickons up 'is zums as if 'e were a table book.

ALICE. He's a right good sort, is Walter Wane; an' for all 'is larnin' he's no more proud nor you or me. An' jist 'cause I looked arter 'im a bit when 'e were sick as any woman would, 'e never seems as

though 'e could do enough for me; and since my little Billy a' bin crippled an' forced to lay at hwome through bein' runned over by Mr Elmer's team, e's come two or dree nights every week an' teachd un 'ow to read and write. There aren't no better sort nor Walter Wane in all the country 'ereabouts. Come, Sam, ain't this ere ready yet? You lads 'ud keep volks chatterin' fro' dawn to set.

[*During this SAM has been at work.*

*Enter PHILIP ASHTON.*

[*He is dressed as a blacksmith, and carries on his shoulder a piece of ironwork which he has been to fetch; now and then he talks with a very slight Dorset dialect, rather the result of association than intentionally assumed.*

PHIL. 'Day to you, Mrs Pether.

ALICE. 'Day to yer, Walter. It's 'igh time yer come back. These lads a' bin chatterin' so, I can't git my vender done.

PHIL. Is it finished, Sam?

SAM. Yes, just done.

ALICE. Come thin. Gi' it me an' let me be off.

PHIL. No need for you to trouble, Mrs Pether. We'll bring it along for you directly.

ALICE. Will yer? Thank yer. I've got to go to Mrs Baynes's, thin I shan't a' no call to go back hwome vurst. Good day, Walter, good day to yer, lads.

[*Exit ALICE PETHER.*

PHIL. Where's the bolts for this harrow, Sam?

SAM. I've fixed 'em all but this. Will that do so.

[*Points to part of it.*]

PHIL. Yes, that's right. Just give me down the wrench. [SAM *gives it.*] Shan't keep you a minute, Harry.

HARRY. A' right lad, I can wait.

PHIL. When you take that fender, Sam, just go on to the vicarage, will you, and bring up the other gate. There you are, Harry, it's ready now.

HARRY. Now thin, Garge, gi' me a 'and, will yer, to put it on the cart.

GEORGE. Right, mate.

[*Exeunt HARRY and GEORGE. They carry out harrow, SAM helping; he comes back for fender.*]

[*Exit SAM.*]

[*PHILIP works for a few seconds, then stops.*]

PHIL. Work goes but wearily to-day. Twice  
Has Wilfred's song, the song he sang last night,  
So strongly stirred those olden memories  
That I cannot o'ermaster them. As he sang  
Of that poor miller and his faithless wife,  
There rose before me, vivid as the glow

[*Looking into fire*]

That kindles there, the once familiar room,  
In those dear days long past, yet present ever.  
Like some poor exile wandering hopeless on,

Who climbs the mountain side, and o'er the vale  
 That he has passed, looks back upon the land  
 He's banished from,—so, as in days gone by,  
 I see the evening shadows stealing round,  
 A loving hand falls gently 'bout my neck,  
 And speaks that dear voice, tremulous with love,  
 “ 'Tis time to rest, Phil, put away your work ; ”  
 And with that little hand about me still,  
 So willingly detained, side by side we sit ;  
 And as the fire with its fitful light  
 Falls on the face that looking up to mine  
 Seems bright with holy trust, do whisperings  
 Of lovers' vows that come from wedded lips  
 Make music ~~found~~, and time goes by forgotten. *ry*  
 Oh God ! that I had died while still my life  
 Was such a peaceful dream ; nor lived to learn  
 The Ruth that seemed so faithful and content  
 Could so unfaithful be !  
 But that's six years ago, and doubtless she,  
 Hearing no tidings of me, deems me dead ;  
 And they are married, may be ; it were best.  
 And she is happy. I would have her so.

[PHILIP resumes his work ; snow begins to  
 fall outside. PHILIP hammering, sparks  
 fly off from the iron. After a short pause,  
 the door is opened.]

*Enter* CORPORAL WILLIAMS.

COR. 'Mornin'.

PHIL. 'Morning.

COR. Got time to do a little job, blacksmith?

PHIL. What is it?

COR. Our captain's broke the chain of his sword here; wants a new link, I think. Can you manage it?

PHIL. Yes, I think so. When do you want it?

COR. The captain told me to leave it as I passed, and said he'd call for it himself. He'll be along in course of half-an-hour. Captain Mackenzie [*going*].

PHIL. Mackenzie!

COR. Good morning to you [*going towards door and not noticing PHILIP'S surprise*].

[*Exit CORPORAL WILLIAMS.*]

PHIL. Mackenzie [*looking at name engraved on sword*].  
Cecil Mackenzie!

Is this some miserable sport of fate,  
A mere ill-chanced coincidence of name?  
Or can this be in very truth the man  
Whose base dishonour took away my peace?  
An' if it be, shall I encounter him?  
'Tis mercy this temptation was delayed.  
An' if this chance had fallen two years ago  
I should have murdered him. And now, may be,  
'T has come to try the strength of my resolve.  
When I lay stricken with sickness, and for days  
Stood tapping at the door of Death, and he

Almost did lift the latch to let me in ;  
As I lay there and summed the poor account  
Of all my past,—as all men dying must,—  
The darkest thought that came condemning me  
Was that for years I'd lived a murderer  
In all but opportunity. I learnt  
I must forego revenge, as at the last  
I would avoid remorse. Shall I fall then  
When chance first makes a trial of my strength ?  
No, he shall from my hands take back the sword  
With which I might have hewn him to the ground.  
He will not know me ; sorrow, heaven be thanked,  
Has changed me all too thoroughly for that.

[*He goes on mending sword.*

*Enter SAM, carrying gate.*

SAM. We must a' thic post out, Walter, or there'll  
be no putting up t' geäte again. It's falled a' inch or  
more out o' t' straight.

PHIL. I thought we could put it right without.

SAM. It's a stoutish post, mind. I count yer'll  
never prize it back. You'll 'ave to hot en vust.

[*Sound of horse approaching heard without.*

[*Exit SAM. He goes out as the horse stops  
outside, and holds it as CECIL MACKENZIE  
dismounts ; snow falling heavily still as door  
opens.*

*Enter CECIL MACKENZIE, dressed in uniform.*

CECIL. Did my man leave a sword here, blacksmith?

PHIL. [*looking at him keenly*]. He did, sir; here it is.

CECIL. You've done it, then.

PHIL. Yes.

CECIL. And very neatly too. Perhaps you could put this right for me. [*Gives chain.*]

PHIL. I'll try.

CECIL. I'm staying in the village for an hour. I'll come back for it.

*Exit* CECIL MACKENZIE.

[PHILIP *watches him out, and after a pause sits down in abstraction.*]

[*Enter* SAM.

[*Sound of horse going away heard.*]

SAM. [*after watching PHILIP*]. What's wrong wi' thee, Walter.

PHIL. [*rousing himself*]. Nothing lad. [*Gets up.*]  
Just weld that chain together, will you.

[*Exit* PHILIP *into house.*]

[SAM *works bellows; the fire glows brightly; snow falling faster; wind howling.*]

SAM. Best shut the door, I think. Fancy there's a roughish storm a kindlin'.

[*As he goes on with work, sound of horse being led into shed is heard.*]

*Enter* GEORGE.

GEORGE. Old mare's dropp'd a shoe, Sam. Will yer see to her? And master's gun's stopped up. Will yer put en right for un?



SAM. [*after unscrewing barrel from stock and looking down it*]. Just d'rectly when I've done this 'ere. [*Goes on with chain.*]

GEORGE. They sojers makes a goodly show. Where be they goin', d'yer know?

SAM. Changing quarters they tell me; goin' on to Blayton to-night, and then to Downley Barricks in the mornin'.

[*Storm still increasing; knocking at door heard.*]

SAM *opens it.*

*Enter RUTH and MABEL.*

MABEL. May we come in for shelter for a time?

SAM. In course yer may, Miss. It's poor accommodation we can gi' yer; but I 'ope yer'll make the best on't. [*He spreads coat that is hanging up over box for seat; they sit on it.*]

MABEL. Thank you.

SAM. Now, George, we'll do your job next.

[*Exeunt SAM and GEORGE.*]

RUTH. What a storm!

MABEL. Yes, dear, an unfortunate day for your first experience of the Dorset country.

RUTH. I'm very glad to come, Mabel; glad to be with you. And your friends at the Grange give us such a genial welcome.

MABEL. Yes, you know they're quite old friends of ours though we've lost sight of them for years. But when we met at Delsmouth last week they would

have us come back with them. You see the Squire's son was in Cecil's regiment, and they were fighting side by side when he was killed ; and that was a new bond between us.

RUTH. How strangely things come round. That you should be going to marry Cecil ! I'm so glad ; nothing has given me such joy since . . . . for these six years.

MABEL. Yes, it was all arranged at Delsmouth ; that is, it was finally arranged. It was not quite the first time it was thought of by . . . Cecil . . . and me.

RUTH. You're a happy woman, Mabel. Cecil is as true and good a man as ever lived. But for his kindness I don't know how little Philippa and I should have got on. After all that terrible past, too. Few men left in the false position he was would have cared for us so nobly. When I went with him to see my mother it was too late, you know. She had died that morning, still thinking bitterly of me ; and all her money was willed away from me. But for Cecil we should have come to want.

MABEL. Don't talk of that now, Ruth, dear. I know he has had no such pleasure in life as helping you ; can have none till he does what he still hopes to do, find Philip and see you happy again.

RUTH. No. I cannot hope for that. Six years and no tidings of him. Oh ! no, he must have died

long, long ago ; died, Mabel, with none but strangers near him—his only thought of me that I had been unfaithful to him, when God knows how day and night I've longed to be at his dear side again if only he might know the truth and believe me innocent before I died. Forgive me, Mabel, I have no right to cloud your joy with my selfish sorrow. Cecil, you say, will be here to-day ?

MABEL. Yes, he writes his regiment will pass through, this morning. Does he know you are here ?

RUTH. No, I came down so suddenly when I got your letter.

*Enter CECIL MACKENZIE.*

CECIL. Here you are Mabel, why I've been searching for you all over the village. What, Ruth here ? This is a pleasant surprise.

MABEL. We were obliged to come in for shelter from the storm. We can go home now. You did not know Ruth was here. She came down yesterday.

CECIL. I'm very glad you've come, Ruth. You could not be in better hands than Mabel's.

RUTH. Cecil, I'm so glad to hear what Mabel tells me. I pray, I know you will be very happy. Oh Cecil, Mabel, as each holds the other's welfare dear, as each cherishes the other's love, never let a dark suspicion come between you. Trust each other

through all and all. [RUTH tries to bear up, but after a pause breaks down and bursts into tears. MABEL comes to her for a moment, then goes to door and opens it as CECIL supports RUTH in his arms.]

*Enter* PHILIP ASHTON.

[*He comes to door unseen by them; suppresses cry, and stands back behind door and listens.*

CECIL. No tears, Ruth. I can have no joy you will not share. Be brave, I mean to make you very happy yet.

RUTH. I have no happiness you do not give; these years past have had none, except for you.

[*Exeunt* CECIL, RUTH, and MABEL. *As they go out, PHILIP comes slowly forward.*]

PHIL. No, Cecil Mackenzie, this I cannot brook. I prayed that I might have strength to spare you. Had I seen you alone I had been strong enough; but to see the base betrayer of my home fondle before my eyes her he has so vilely lured from right! I cannot bear that. [*He goes hastily into house and returns with pistol.*] May heaven forgive my crime and take my life! [*He rushes to the door and deliberately aims pistol at CECIL without; as he fires SAM comes in and thrusts his arm up so that he fires pistol into the air. PHILIP comes down with a wild cry and falls with his face to the ground. SAM takes pistol and throws it into the red fire and covers it.*]

*Enter CECIL, RUTH, and MABEL.*

*[They come hurriedly and stand partly inside the forge door.]*

SAM. *[holding gun barrel which GEORGE has left].*  
There's no harm done, miss ; there was a charge left  
in the gun I was a cleaning.

*Quick Curtain.*

ACT III. SCENE I.

SCENE.—*The forge. The morning after.*

SAM *discovered. He is working at a shoe.*

SAM. Poor Walter, that was a strange fit comed on un last night ; to shoot at they gentlevolks as was 'ere. What could they a said or done to 'im to make him take so furious. I'm afeard Harry an' they as judge 'im partwise crazy are in the rights on't. Sure I a' seen 'im often enough mutterin' an murmurin' to 'issel ; an' 'e a bin strange a bit at times ; but I never thought 't could be so bad as 'ud come to this. Well, well, there's nothin' left to show for't now. The stock o' the pistol's burnt to ash, and what there's left o' the metal on't arter an hour in the vire an' a turn on the anvil might a' bin anything for what volks could tell on't.

*Enter ALICE PETHER.*

ALICE. 'Day to yer Sam. 'Ows Walter 's marnen ?

SAM. He's well eno', thank yer, missis ; 'e'll be in at work d'rectly 'most.

ALICE. How come yer to be sich a sawney, Sam, as to let the charge out o' that ere gun git at Walter ? Yer must 'a bin daft, lad, I should think.

SAM. It were stupid, missis, but I never thought there were anything inside un. But there's no great yarm done ; just scraped 'is leg—t'arnt 'urt un much ; but 'e were out of sarts yesterday, an' I s'pose the shock on't told on un. He's all right now.

ALICE. Well, mind yer axe un, Sam, if I can do aught for un. I could come for a day or two to look arter un if er needs it, mind.

SAM. Right, missis. I'll tell un on't.

[*Exit* ALICE PETHER.

SAM. No, Missis Pether, we must manage wi'out you. Leave Walter 'long o' you ten minit, an' there'd be a story round t'village avore night, different to what I started yesterday.

*Enter* PHILIP ASLTON.

SAM. How art feelin' now, Walter?

PHIL. Strangely, Sam. You're sure no one was hurt last night?

SAM. 'Urt man, no. Who should a' bin ; no yarm done, but t' scrape yer got across your leg when you fell down.

PHIL. That's nothing. You're sure I did not hit him?

SAM. Come, Walter, don't talk no more about it.

PHIL. Sam, don't think because last night, when it was over, my head grew weak and thoughts seemed wandering, I've forgotten what I tried to do ; what you prevented me from doing. Words can't thank

you, Sam, nor aught beside that's in my power. Old friend, what little peace life still has left for me I owe to you. [*He takes his hand.*]

SAM. You make too much on't, Walter. I did no more nor you'd a' done for anybody. Forget it, lad. [*Goes on with shoe.*]

PHIL. What work's in, Sam?

SAM. Not much to-day. T' carrier's horse to shoe, an' one or two other small jobs. Don't you mind that, I'll see to't.

[*Exit SAM. He takes hot shoe with him into shed.*]

PHIL. How frail and feeble is a man's resolve.  
It leads him safe but where no dangers are,  
And leaves him helpless when his passions rise.  
Who deems his will hath power to control,  
Is like a vessel, with its helmsman lost,  
That moves securely on the open sea ;  
But coming where the rocks and shallows are  
But frets and rages, breaks and sinks below.  
When yesterday I gave him back his sword,  
I felt so strongly armed with strength to bear,  
That I could look upon my bitterest foe,  
And raise no hand against him ; and the will  
That came to harm him passed as harmless by  
As snow that faltering falls upon the earth.  
A little while and when I looked upon  
No more than what the merest passing thought



Had told me was a six years' daily fact,  
And the mad heedless impulse to revenge  
Hurried me helpless to the brink of crime,  
An impulse strong and reckless as the rush  
Of the same snowflakes gathered in a mass  
When through a deep ravine the wild wind drives,  
O'erwhelming all in its resistless ruin.  
But for the saving hand of yonder lad  
Man's darkest crime were added to my score.  
Why was I kept from that? God knows, not I,  
Why He should help where help's so ill deserved.  
Twice saved as if by wonder; once when death  
Had come upon a weary bed of pain  
A welcome friend; and once when had he come  
'T had been to drag a miserable wretch,  
With senses dulled by heavy sense of guilt,  
To shame and violence. Destiny  
Hath surely for a man so kept some task  
That he may best fulfil. Yet longer here  
I must not, will not stay. The bitter truth  
Of yesterday must out, and in a week  
The very children that I've played amongst  
Would point in scorn and mocking pass me by;  
Yet truly have I found in Deliston,  
This quiet corner of the restless world,  
Among the simple village folk, more friends  
Than ever else before; and I had thought  
To die amongst them, still a village smith.

But that's all past. I have no right to choose.

*Enter SAM and PHILIPPA.*

SAM. Yes, here he be, miss. This little missie's come down fro' t' Grange, Walter, to ask how th' art. [*Seeing him still musing, speaks aside to him.*] Come Walter, man, git up an' talk to her; yer ne'er so 'appy as when yer talkin' wi' childern. Talk to her, man, things 'll look brighter then. [*Goes back to PHILIPPA.*] Go up an' talk to un, missie.

PHILA. Are you better to-day?

PHIL. Yes, thank you, miss; I'm well enough.

[*Exit SAM. SAM has waited to see them talking together. PHILIPPA stands away from fire, so that her face is darkened.*]

PHILA. Were you hurt very much?

My mother said she was afraid you were.

PHIL.

No, little maid,

I wasn't hurt. The squire sent?—but no,

You're not the squire's little granddaughter?

You don't live at the Grange?

PHILA.

I'm staying there.

PHIL. I hear there's quite a party of you there, You little folks. 'T will glad the squire's heart.

You've had some merry games this Christmas time?

PHILA. We only came two days ago.

PHIL.

You'll like

The Grange. The squire makes his visitors All happy.

PHILA. He is very kind indeed.  
But I was happy when I came. At least  
I nearly always am.

PHIL. And not always?  
You can't have troubles.

PHILA. No, but mother has;  
And when I see her cry it makes me cry.

PHIL. Come here, my child, and tell me of your  
griefs.

*[She goes to him and he takes her hand in his;  
her face still shaded. As she turns slowly  
round SAM comes in, puts shoe in fire and  
works bellows so that it glows brightly; he  
then goes out. The light has fallen full on  
her face. PHILIP stares at her in wonder.*

That face! that face! *[Takes locket from his breast  
and looks at it.]* Great God! can this be true?

What is your name?

PHILA. Phillie.

PHIL. I mean your last,  
Your other name.

PHILA. Ashton.

PHIL. How old are you?

PHILA. I'm five last birthday, so I'm nearly six.

PHIL. *[aside]*. My child, my child!

*[Struggles to still conceal his emotion, but failing,  
takes her on his knees, and bursts into tears.*

My child, my child!

PHILA. Don't cry like that. It makes me so unhappy.

That's just what mother does.

PHIL. What do you say

They call you, dear?

PHILA. Phillie, but then it's not  
My name; my real name is Philippa.  
And mother's often told me that she wished  
I was a boy because she'd call me Philip.  
That was my father's name, and so she took  
The nearest name she could.

PHIL. Does your mother  
Ever speak to you of him?

PHILA. Sometimes, not often;  
For when I ask about him then she cries,  
And so I am afraid to ask.

PHIL. You said  
You mother was unhappy.

PHILA. Yes, sometimes.

PHIL. And have you many friends?

PHILA. No, no one comes  
But Cecil. He is often there. I'm glad  
He is because he is so kind to mother,  
And she seems always happier when he's there.  
But mother's coming here. I'd better go  
And meet them, shall I?

[Exit PHILIPPA.]

PHIL. [*He has kissed her before she went, and watches her, as she runs out, with open locket in his hand; then falls on seat in tears.*]

My child! my child! I had no thought of this.  
Her mother's face in every line the same.  
That she should find me in my banishment  
And tell me with her pretty innocent lips  
Of her own mother's shame. "No, no one comes  
But Cecil," and, of course, "he's often there."  
Oh Ruth, I never in my hardest thought  
Of you have dreamed of perfidy so base.  
A mother with her husband's child, that plays  
In happy innocence about her knee,  
While she, her face flushed with the foul caress  
Of her seducer, looks upon its sport.  
And she that seemed so stainless and so pure!  
Can passion so blot out all womanhood?  
Then earth cannot contain the woes of men.  
The saintliest sisters that with spotless lives  
Point out the way to heaven; the very children  
Nurtured in homes of holy purity  
May change into a pestilential brood,  
Born but to blight a ruined world, when lust  
With its allurements lights the cursèd way.

*Enter SAM.*

Hast thou a sweetheart, lad? an' if thou hast  
Then shun her as some venomous distil  
That mingling with thy blood, would straightway change

Thy form and feature into loathsome shape ;  
Would make thy tortured limbs grow pale and lean  
With endless pain ; and leave thee at the last  
But festered carrion cast upon the waste,  
A meal for ravening wolves to quarrel for.

[*Tears locket from his breast and throws it into fire.*  
As that shall burn and all its trace be lost,  
So burn all they who're traitors in their love.

[*Exit PHILIP ASHTON. He is pale and prostrate with passion as he goes out. SAM looks after him in awe, then absently takes out locket from fire.*

SAM. Poor lad, what ails him so? Shall I go to 'im or is er best alone. I must get some wiser 'ead nor mine to riddle this.

*Enter MABEL, RUTH, and PHILIPPA.*

RUTH [*to Philippa as they come in*]. What mean you, dear? I do not understand you.

MABEL [*to SAM*]. How is he to-day?

SAM. I don't know, miss ; there's something strangely wrong.

RUTH [*to Philippa*]. What did he tell you, dear?

PHILA. He seemed so strange, and kissed me so ; and then he cried as you do, mother, dear ; and then he took a locket from his breast and looked at it, and then he looked at me.

SAM. Do you mean this, miss? [*Gives locket.*]

RUTH [*taking the locket, opens it, and seeing her own*

*portrait, utters a cry of mingled pain and joy*]. What is the blacksmith's name?

SAM. Walter Wane.

RUTH. Do you know him by any other name?

SAM. No other, lady.

RUTH. How long has he been here?

SAM. Six years come Middlemas.

RUTH. Six years! Six. Oh, Mabel, Mabel! Can this—oh, no—can this be Philip here?

*[She is almost fainting as Mabel supports her.*

MABEL. Don't look so wild, dear. Ruth, dear Ruth, be brave.

RUTH *[recovering and speaking with feverish haste]*. Where is he now?

SAM. There, in 'is cottage, lady; went in vive minit ago.

RUTH *[going to door, tries to open, but finds it fastened within]*. Mabel, you, good fellow, open this. I must, I will go in.

*[She continues struggling at the door, till it is slowly opened from within.*

*Enter* PHILIP ASHTON.

*[He is pale and terribly calm. RUTH looks at him, recognises him, and is about to throw herself into his arms, but repulsed by his stern coldness, falls back in a paroxysm of tears. MABEL supports her. PHILLIPA retains locket*

*in her hand; a pause, during which RUTH slowly recovers.*

RUTH [*falling on her knees before him*]. Philip, husband, love!

PHIL. From you these words fall strangely.

*Enter CECIL MACKENZIE.*

*[He remains unnoticed at back.*

RUTH. Have pity on me, Philip. If a thought  
Of wrongs I've done abuses still your mind,  
Hear me at least before you do condemn.  
In all the six years of my widowed life  
I never laid me on my weary bed,  
Weary of waiting, faint with hope delayed,  
Before a prayer had risen from my lips  
That we might meet, and all your doubts of me  
Be ta'en away, if only but to hear  
You call me wife and feel the lips I love  
Press mine again before I came to die.  
Philip, Philip!

PHIL. Yourself, six years ago,  
Told me I stood between you and your love.  
"Twere best that we should part." So ran the words.  
You had your will.

CECIL [*coming forward*]. 'Fore heaven, you wrong  
her, sir!  
And wronging her, wrong me.

PHIL. Are you here, too?  
You're tempting fortune too adventurously.



When yesternight you stood together there,  
My passion did o'er-master reason. The sound  
That brought you back was but the weapon's charge  
With which I should have killed you in your guilt,  
But for yon peasant that turned back my hand.  
Go, thank him for the life you owe to him,  
And see you leave't not in my power again.

CECIL. I do forgive you your mistaken hate.  
Philip, you shall hear me. The words you read  
That hapless day were writ by Ruth for me.  
I came that morning in a sudden haste  
To take her to her dying mother's side ;  
And she, not knowing why I came, did deem—  
From some chance phrase I sent her hurriedly—  
My motive base ; and so, in loyalty  
To you, she wrote for me the words you read.  
This is the truth, no more.

MABEL. Believe it, sir.  
As I stand here as his affianced wife,  
Nor he, nor Ruth, have ever earned your blame.

RUTH. You do believe it, Philip? Say you do.  
Your little child, that all these years has craved  
A father's love, is not more pure than I  
Have ever been in deed and thought to you.

[SAM, scarcely able to suppress his tears, here  
brings PHILIPPA forward ; he has tied the  
locket to a piece of ribbon she wears.

PHIL. Ruth, Ruth, my wife! my true, mistrusted wife!

I do believe you. How in years to come  
 Shall I requite the wrong I've done to you?  
 Here in my solitude, where'er I turned  
 To woo forgetfulness, the happy past  
 Came back to make by contrast with its joy  
 My lonely misery more hard to bear.  
 So by the anguish that my fault has earned,  
 I measure yours that has not been deserved.  
 Forgive me, Ruth; my sin has been avenged.

*[He kneels down, and taking PHILIPPA on his knee, kisses her passionately.]*

RUTH *[as he rises]*. Oh, Philip dearest!

PHIL. Teach my little girl

To arm her heart with strength of simple trust  
 Always; and tell her how her father fell  
 For lack of it.

RUTH *[with her arms round PHILIP'S neck, as he holds PHILIPPA with one hand]*.

And teach her, too, to be  
 In all beside the counterpart of thee.

*[MABEL and CECIL together. SAM fairly bursts into tears of joy. PHILIP for a moment turns to CECIL and holds out his hand as asking forgiveness.]*

*Curtain.*

Sir Jasper's Dow.

A PLAY

IN THREE ACTS.

CHARACTERS.

SIR JASPER CRAVEN.

COLONEL WAYLAND.

DONALD DARE.

OLD SIMON WISE (*formerly servant to the Cravens*).

SIMON WISE (*servant to Sir Jasper Craven*).

ANNE DARE (*mother to Donald*).

ANNABEL (*niece to Sir Jasper Craven*).

*Scene.—In a Country Mansion in England.*

*Time.—The Present.*

*A week is supposed to elapse between Acts I. and II.*

ACT I. SCENE I.

SCENE.—*A room in Craven Hall, the home of Sir Jasper Craven. The furniture and everything about the room indicates that nothing has been changed for many years. Panelled walls. Two or three massive cabinets. Two full-length portraits at back, one of a man, the other of a woman. Entrances R. and L.*

SIR JASPER *discovered seated at table with small open chest in front of him. His costume corresponds with general appearance of room. He is counting coins and notes which he puts into chest.*

SIR J. Nine, ten, a hundred, twenty thousand pounds.  
And if men knew that I had hidden here  
This mass of gold, forsooth, they'd call me miser,  
Would put me in the list of dotard fools  
Who harbour money, just for money's sake.  
And yet I would not give an hour's thought  
For all the wealth that made the fame of Cræsus ;  
Except that with my wealth I look to serve  
The one sole end and object of my life.  
Each pound, nay, every penny that I add  
To that dear pile, I do expect to yield  
Its worth of vengeance, as a usurer

Expects a pound to yield a pound's reward.  
Revenge ! they say 'tis noble to forgive ;  
'Tis well enough for men to preach that tale  
Whoever have been wronged. Had they been wronged  
As I have been, they'd choose another text.  
Would I could see thee—for these eighteen years  
I've gazed on where thou art, and only seen  
Blank nothingness and darkness without end.  
Blind ! 'twas one more haunting fiend that came  
When first mine eyes denied their natural use  
To urge me to my end. Bah ! let it go.

*[Puts away money in chest, and puts chest in cabinet, which he locks. Rings bell on table.*

*Enter SIMON WISE.*

SIR J. Is Colonel Wayland here ?

SIMON. He rode but now into the the court, sir ;  
he hath been treated somewhat sturdily.

SIR J. What mean you ?

SIMON. It seems the Colonel passing by the lodge  
addressed the keeper's daughter in words that not  
too well become a gentleman, or, shall I say, Sir  
Jasper, in words that only gentlemen are privileged  
to use. The keeper heard him, and as he met him  
at the court-yard gate, took a leaf from the colonel's  
book and greeted him in homely phrase.

SIR J. Begone ; remind the keeper that he is my  
guest.

SIMON. I will, Sir Jasper. I'll chide him for the

unnatural folly of being angry when his daughter is insulted. [*Aside.*] I fancy I can teach the keeper some good round terms of mild abuse may serve him on a like occasion.

SIR J. See that my guest is courteously attended ; then bid him come to me. [*Exit SIMON.*]

SIR J. There lives not for three counties round about A greater scoundrel than Wayland. For that He'll serve my purposes the better.

[*He goes up to the full-length portrait of a man.*]

Thou,

Thou art my brother ; e'en my sightless eye  
Can see each feature of thy hated face,  
As well defined as if in truth I saw  
Not some dead picture, but thy very self.  
Thou took'st from me the only living thing  
That ever stirred a pure or holy thought  
Within my heart. You knew it not, you say.  
Thou did'st it, and it is the same to me.

[*Goes up to the full-length portrait of a woman.*]

And thou, sweet Annabel, man never lived  
That loved more fondly than I once loved thee.  
Hadst thou been mine, I might have been a man,  
And lived a purer life ; but ere you knew  
How well I loved, he robbed me of my love.  
Thy daughter bears thy name. A time there was  
When I was fool enough to fondly trust  
No child but mine should ever call thee mother,

So was it when the sudden summons came,  
To tend my brother's wedding—thine and his ;  
That day love changed to hate ; and next to love  
The strongest thing is hate. That day I vowed  
Revenge, and I will keep my vow. Thy child,  
I will so 'whelm with misery and despair,  
That all the wrongs my brother did to me  
Shall be ten times repaid.

*[Hearing footsteps, comes down stage.]*

*Enter COLONEL WAYLAND.*

WAY. Good morning, Craven.

SIR J. Good morning, Colonel, your visit is well  
timed. We are alone ?

WAY. No devil's conference was ever freer from  
the uncongenial presence of angels than we are from  
interruption.

SIR J. And now, how go your plans ?

WAY. Well, not too thrivingly. Your haughty niece  
repels me with as pretty a scorn as ever graced an  
angry woman.

SIR J. Ah ! never fear, your tame consenting maid  
who never falters in her first reply is not worth your  
winning ; she'll be as ready to give consent again to  
the next wooer who comes across her path, as she  
hath been to you.

WAY. I'm somewhat of a veteran in these en-  
counters. I've wooed and won and thrown aside  
often enough to make me an expert in the recon-



noitre ; but I never yet saw resistance that showed such good promise of enduring.

SIR J. You urge your suit, may be, too harshly ; with such a maid as Annabel, a gentler tone, a subtler and assumed tenderness, avails far more.

WAY. Psha ! I've turned sweet phrases for the pretty fool might grace a dreamer of nineteen. It's not the manner of my wooing, Jasper Craven, it's the man that she resents. And to tell truth, with you and me it's a new feeling to record, but I'm growing half ashamed of this low scheme. I can play the villain with as light a conscience as—well, as you ; but this girl's different from the rest, and it seems mean even to me to plan and plot till she is made my wife, and then to throw her to the world, while you stand by and mock her misery.

SIR J. You falter, Wayland. The prize is worth the winning.

WAY. P'faith it is ; but sometimes I feel I'd rather lose your thousands than make my conscience so much blacker than it is.

SIR J. It must and shall be done. Fair means, if you can use them with success ; if not, well still, it must be done.

WAY. 'Twas a contract fairly made, so much villainy for so much reward. If I disclaim the wages, no need to do what earns them.

SIR J. Wayland, I hold this purpose dearer than my life. You and you only can accomplish it.

WAY. And I . . . I will not.

SIR J. Will not? nay, you will. Do you remember thirteen years ago, a certain midnight in a Russian town? [WAYLAND *starts.*] Two men discussed some matters of the past. By joint consent they burnt some documents, the only records as they thought of even darker deeds than this. Wayland, you were out-tricked then; the papers you saw mouldering in the fire were not what you believed.

WAY. Craven, you lie.

SIR J. May be I do. Read this. [*Shews paper.*] Now tell me, do you still refuse?

WAY. You shall have your will.

SIR J. Oh! never fear; you help me, I'm a generous friend; you thwart me,—but I know you'll not. Now hark you, it must be at once. Ere this day week make Annabel your wife.

*Enter SIMON WISE.*

[*He places claret, &c., before SIR JASPER and WAYLAND, who talk apart.*

SIMON. [*Aside.*] A spider once a plot did make  
Away a poor fly's life to take;  
Two other flies o'erheard the plot,  
And so a fine dead fly they got;  
And when the spider was asleep,  
They told the fly away to creep,  
And put the dead one in its place;  
The spider rose with smiling face,

And then within his web did take  
His prey, and meant a meal to make ;  
But when he'd got the victim in,  
He found it was an empty skin.

Now that's a story that pleases me.

SIR J. Where is your mistress, Simon ?

SIMON. I know not, sir. An hour since she went to roam the park, to feed her deer, or listen to the birds she loves.

WAY. Thou false and prating knave ; myself did see her as I rode hither a mile beyond the village.

SIR J. I have long suspected she has forgot, or remembering, disobeyed my strict command. I did forbid her pass the entrance of the park, except she went with me.

SIMON. Well, then, Sir Jasper, as you have scarce been seen without them for these ten years or more, maybe she has grown tired of delay.

SIR J. Simon, you have some influence with your mistress. It were well to use it. Teach her to obey my wish in all ; for all is for her good designed.

SIMON. Aye, yes, Sir Jasper, I'll be bound she will obey. In truth she is as sincere in her submission to your wish as you are in your anxiety for her welfare.

SIR J. [*to WAYLAND*]. She may be here at once.  
You'll follow me.

[*Turning towards SIMON. Aside.*

I cannot read this shallow fool aright :

Sometimes he seems to point ambiguous scorn  
 At me. Sometimes his hollow phrases seem  
 To have a meaning that applies to me ;  
 Can he have will or wit to mar my plan ?  
 I must be keen. I think I know my man.

[*Exit* SIR JASPER.]

WAY. Do you know, I've often wondered, fellow,  
 for what good qualities your master keeps you.

SIMON. Eh ! well, sir, I once heard tell of a soldier,  
 who had the only map existing of the country. 'Twas  
 little use to him, for he knew every hole and corner,  
 but he kept it with a wonderful care lest his foes should  
 become possessed of it. I've been a tidy time, sir, in  
 this house, and know a little of its family stories.

WAY. Aye, well, no doubt he's right. I warrant  
 you're a useful fellow when you're wanted. [*Aside.*]  
 Some day, perchance, he'll be of use to me. [*Aloud.*]  
 Here's gold for you.

[*Exit* COLONEL WAYLAND.]

SIMON. [*With coin in his hand, which WAYLAND  
 has given him.*]

A king a courtier made a duke,  
 Because he should not help his foes ;  
 The title and its wealth he took,  
 And then he helped whiche'er he chose.

Simon, that courtier's example is worthy of your most  
 careful imitation.

[*Exit* SIMON WISE.]

## SCENE II.

*A glade in the park ; two or three old trees fallen.*

*Enter ANNABEL and DONALD DARE.*

[ANNABEL is quite unnerved, and half supported  
by DONALD DARE.

AN. I thank you, sir, for your most kind attendance,  
And I do pray you, do not deem my thanks  
The less sincere, or me discourteous,  
If I should beg you make my debt the greater  
By hastening from the park ; for my uncle  
With whom I live, an he should find you here,  
Would sternly censure me that let you come.  
The customs of our home are not, alack,  
The common customs of an English home.

DON. In all I would obey your slightest wish,  
Fair lady ; but I fear your hurt may prove  
More dangerous than it seems.

AN. Nay ; 'tis but slight,  
'Twas but a moment's fright, and hurrying here  
I fell . . . 'tis nothing . . . it will pass away.

[*She swoons.*

*Enter SIMON WISE.*

SIMON. Good sir, what is't's amiss? My mistress  
is not hurt?

DON. I fear she is. I saw her hurrying towards  
the park. She fell, and I ran up to help her. She

rose faint and pale, and said something indistinctly of having been greeted by a man she hates. Go quickly, get some help. [Exit SIMON WISE.

[DONALD places ANNABEL so that her head may rest on tree. She faces audience. He kneels beside her. After a short pause, she in her delirium sings in a subdued voice.

AN. [*singing*]. Oh ! my life was blithe and gay  
In the days of long ago,  
All its glory passed away  
When they laid my father low.  
When they bore him sad and slowly  
To his rest for evermore ;  
To the churchyard still and holy  
Where my mother slept before.  
Then my life grew dark and dreary,  
Vanished ev'ry joy I had,  
Grew each day more long and weary,  
All my life more lone and sad.  
Nothing came to cheer my sorrow,  
No caresses as of yore,  
No loving counsel—each to-morrow  
Only sadder than before.  
But whenever life is saddest  
Come our brightest joys always,  
As on that day, of days the gladdest,  
On that last midsummer day.

On that day, of days the rarest,  
When among the reapers came  
The first of men—of men the fairest,  
Donald Dare they called his name.

*[As she repeats the last line slowly, she opens her eyes and gradually recovers.]*

AN. I thank you, sir, for all your kindly help.  
Once more my thanks ; I can go safely now.

DON. *[detaining her gently as she is about to rise].*  
The short delirium that your fright brought on  
Has told a secret that I most had wished,  
Yet scarce did hope to ever hear from you.  
You have been singing of your weary life,  
And that, that late has made it happier ;  
And 'twas my name that mingled with your song.

*[ANNABEL pauses, looks at him, and learns from his face what she has been singing.]*

AN. 'Twas but an idle rhyme I strung together  
And set one day to something of a tune.  
'Twas never meant for other ears than mine.  
I pray you, sir, forget it ; and forgive  
That chance has ever put your name in keeping  
With words so idle. And I pray you, sir,  
Go from the park. I cannot bear to think  
What ill my uncle may for both devise  
If he should find you here.

DON. Nay, lady fair,  
Before—but that thy state forbad my leaving you—

I should have gone, and let the blessed time  
That we had passed together, like the sun  
Remembered in a sunless clime, stream down  
Its rays of glory through the lonely years  
Of all my after life. But now I have  
Another pretext makes me bold to stay.

AN. Oh ! sir, you do not know what piteous need  
Compels me bid a kind protector go.

DON. If when I've told you what I have to tell  
You bid me go, then I will do your bidding.  
I cannot go before that tale is told.  
'Twas hard upon a year ago, I chanced  
To pass your village. From my childhood's days  
I loved to paint the flowers of the field.  
My mother—and I was her only child—  
Lived in Italy. In that home of art  
I studied long ; she did procure for me  
The ablest teaching that the land affords.  
I chose a painter's life. Three years ago  
I came to travel through my mother's land  
And see the English home, where she was born.  
My mother, always tending me, came too.  
One morning as I wandered by the stream  
And loitered with the mowers in the field,  
A fairer form than I had ever seen,  
Than all the painted glories of old Rome,  
Came through the mead. A little sunburnt boy  
Told me it was the Mistress Annabel,



Who came, he said, each morning from the hall,  
To nurse his fever-stricken mother.

AN. [*absently*]. 'Twas last Midsummer day.

DON. To me it was

Not last Midsummer day alone ; it was  
Midsummer day, Midsummer of my life,  
Beginning, consummation, end of all ;  
The day when something sprang to joyous life  
Within my heart, whose like I'd never known.  
It was the birthday of my love. Since then  
The years that were before seem one long night  
Through which I passed, and never had a thought  
There was a sun could change that night to day.  
The boasted beauties of a southern clime  
Have never stirred a thrill within my heart.  
Since I have lived in England I have been  
Amidst her gayest and her fairest scenes,  
And seen a wealth of beauty, other lands  
May envy, not surpass ; for English maids  
Are fairer than them all. . And I have seen  
Such maids, whose noble gifts of mind and soul  
Were fitly matched with outward grace and beauty.  
And yet I never had a thought of love  
Till last Midsummer day. And will you now,  
Ere scarce I've learned the truth I've lived to learn,  
Command me to forget and go away.

AN. Oh, sir, a chance, I know not well or ill,  
Has told you what I never should have told

Had I the power to direct my words.  
Yet be it so. Since half the tale is told,  
Why hear the rest. Within yon dreary hall  
My life has grown to abject slavery.  
My uncle, with the pretext to protect,  
Makes it a prison, and himself ordains  
For every day some new and cruel means  
To rob me of what little joys remain.  
I loved the fields; I loved to tend the poor;  
And he forbade me go beyond the gates.  
And then I learnt to pass the whole day long  
In listening to the song of happy birds,  
And in companionship of meadow flowers  
That grew in little corners of the park,  
Where I would go and tell to them my woes,  
Until my heart grew lighter for my tears.  
And so I lived long months until the day  
When first I saw you. Donald, from that hour  
I loved the very field where first we met.  
For hours have I lingered by the way,  
And half in musing murmured to myself,  
“ ’Twas here he came, that last Midsummer day.”  
Then all the fervent passion of my heart  
By nature wild, broke forth in happy burst  
Of yearning love no power could control.  
Bright peaceful dreams of some great happiness,  
That when I woke seemed out of reason's bound,  
Hovered around me in the still midnight;

And ev'ry gentle murmur of the winds  
Was laden with sweet messages from thee.  
Oh, sir, forgive me, if in this wild hour  
It seems that I have told my love unmaidenly.  
All I have felt with such o'erwhelming strength,  
I had not strength when thus and here we met,  
To leave untold. If the delirious joy  
Of being thus with thee, and hearing words  
Of love, of which I've dreamt this many a day,  
O'ersteps the proper bounds of modesty,  
Oh ! sir, forgive me, if you will forget.

DON. My Annabel, mine, now for ever mine,  
No words were ever yet so strongly framed  
That they could mar a maiden's modesty,  
When they but speak the secrets of the heart,  
The earnest telling of an earnest love.  
Henceforward fame will be a dearer prize,  
For it will make thee proud. Henceforward wealth  
Worth winning, for it will be shared by thee.  
I'll see your uncle, and he must consent  
To keep a wedding in his dreary halls.

AN. His name has driven far and far away  
The fond forgetfulness of this sweet hour.

DON. Is he so stern a tyrant? He shall learn  
That others can be stern as well as he.

*Enter SIMON WISE.*

SIMON [*aside*]. In nursery rhymes I have heard say  
That cats being absent mice will  
play.

Oh-h-h! My mistress seems to be recovering. She's very carefully attended. The doctor, sir, has gone some miles away to cure a patient. But I met a lady as I went, your mother, so she says. She's gone with remedies to the hall, where she expects to find you. I'll tell her that you follow.

[*Exit* SIMON WISE.]

DON. My mother—nay, but this is well indeed, She long has shared the secret of my love.

AN. Oh! Donald, I have wronged you when I told You of my love. My uncle now will plan The ills for you he ever plans for me. His schemes are deep and cruel, and I have No friend but Simon there. It would be hard To see the snare that's laid to ruin you And have no power to forewarn or help.

DON. These are but idle fears. Come, sweet, be gay, For love will win though tyrants bar the way.

[*Exeunt* ANNABEL and DONALD DARE.]

### SCENE III.

*Same as Scene I.*

*Enter* SIR JASPER CRAVEN and COLONEL WAYLAND.

WAY. Oh yes, it can be done; but then we must have copy, Craven, to work from.

SIR J. That you can have. [*Rings bell on table.*]

*Enter SIMON WISE.*

Simon, open with this key the lower door of yonder cabinet; above the inner door upon the carving, you see a Tudor rose; press hard the stem. [SIMON *does so, click, secret door opens.*] There is an iron case within. With this key open that. In it there are three papers, one old and bound with tape and fastened with a seal. Unbind it and then read aloud the title that it bears. [SIMON *has opened and been reading others.*]

SIR J. Well!

SIMON [*reading from the paper which he has open before him, and which has greatly absorbed his attention*]. "Terms of a marriage settlement between  
——"

SIR J. [*angry and trembling*]. Not that, you faithless fool. That bore no seal. The other, read.

SIMON [*taking up another*]. Last will and——

SIR J. Yes, yes, I know; that's right. Here, give it me; now lock the cabinet securely. [SIMON *does so and gives keys to SIR J.*]. Go! [*Exit SIMON WISE*]. This, Wayland, is my brother's full instruction to his lawyer, and in his own hand-writing. 'Tis of no real value, but I would not have it lost. It pleases me sometimes to take it out, although I cannot see it.

WAY. When was this written?

SIR J. A year before he died ; 'twill serve your purpose, will it not ?

WAY. Yes, it shall be done.

SIR J. And see 'tis safely kept. Come to me in the library ; there are all materials there, and we shall be safe from interference. 'Tis a most wise plan, good friend, and it shall succeed. My haughty lady, we will remedy your proud disdain.

[*Exit* SIR JASPER CRAVEN.]

WAY. Craven, you're a deeper villain than I thought. [*Folds paper and puts it in his pocket. Goes to cabinet.*] Locked of course ; that cursed Russian paper's there. If I could get hold of that I could defy you, Craven, and let you do your villany yourself.

[*Exit* COLONEL WAYLAND.]

*Enter* SIMON WISE.

[*He looks round cautiously, then speaks off through door.*]

SIMON. Come, mistress, there is no one here.

*Enter* ANNABEL and DONALD DARE.

SIMON [*to* DONALD]. I'll tell the lady you are here.

[*Exit* SIMON WISE.]

DON. Dear Annabel, have thou no fear for me Or for yourself.

AN. My chiefest are for you.

*Enter* ANNE DARE.

[*She is shown in by* SIMON, *who goes out.*]

ANNE D. Why, Donald, what is this hath brought you here ?

Yon curious fellow said you were within,  
Tending a wounded lady.

DON. He told you true, but time has wrought a cure.  
Long prelude would become the occasion ill ;  
You know how I have loved right well and long,  
Know now my earnest love has been returned ;  
My mother, 'tis the Lady Annabel.  
Henceforward she must share with me the right  
To call thee mother.

ANNE D. [*to ANNABEL*]. Sweet child, is it so ?

[*ANNABEL assents.*]

My boy ! God's brightest blessings on you both.

AN. Alas ! you know but half the tale as yet.  
My uncle, in whose constant care I live,  
Knows not of this, else he with angry scorn  
Would drive him hence and scoff at all our love.

ANNE D. Oh ! uncles have been obdurate ere this,  
And yet have often blessed their truant wards  
When most they meant to chide ; should he resist,  
I'll try my power to persuade.

[*She goes up stage, stops suddenly before the  
portrait of a man.*]

His name ?

Thy uncle's name ?

AN. Sir Jasper Craven. Why ?

ANNE D. Most like, yet not the same, most like

. . . Is that

His picture there ?





ACT II. SCENE I.

SCENE.—*The same as in Act I. Scene I.*

SIR JASPER CRAVEN and COLONEL WAYLAND *discovered.*

SIR J. Wayland, your cunning has surpassed itself. 'Twas well devised; an this bring not the scornful lady to our feet, henceforth I'll trust no villainy. [*Indicating paper which he holds.*] The writing's like you say, and written as you read. You do not lie?

WAY. I do not lie in compacts made with you.

SIR J. I'll trust you, friend, and when the game's played out, will pay you richly for your pains. To-day when Annabel returns your bride, the moiety of all my wealth shall go to her, and all be subject to your absolute control. So, seeming with a kind and generous love to fitly dower an esteemed niece, shall I pay you the wages of your work. If I seemed sceptical, 'tis loss of sight that genders something of distrust. And, Wayland, you know I can be foe as well as friend. If you should cheat me aught in this, I'd tear the blinding scales away that cloud mine eyes for just one moment's sight, that I might see to curse and kill thee; all full well content to meet with

any end, and know your falseness was avenged. . . .  
 Forgive me, Wayland, I cannot well control my passion when I have so much at stake.

WAY. Come, Craven, I have served you more than once in dark exploit, and thieves know something of a code of honour. If you would profit by my help, accept my word. Well trusted I can work with good effect; suspicion breeds deceit. If you expect the service that you need, 'twere best to trust me as I have deserved.

SIR J. Enough! you're sure that no one saw you come.

WAY. No living soul save him you sent to bid me come, and he's paid well to keep his counsel.

SIR J. Be near at hand and come when the occasion serves to help me if I fail. Take your weapon. [*Gives paper.*] You will need it then.

WAY. 'Twill wound more keenly than envenomed steel. [*Aside.*] Curses on the past that drives me to its use.

[*Exit COLONEL WAYLAND.*]

[*SIR J. rings bell on table.*]

*Enter SIMON WISE.*

SIR J. Tell Mistress Dare I crave her presence.

SIMON. Yes, Sir Jasper.

SIR J. Simon, you know that Colonel Wayland's here?

SIMON. I do sir. [*Sees that SIR J. is occupied at table. Aside, holding coins in his hand.*] A guinea last

week and two more to-day. Colonel Wayland grows strangely generous. I wonder what villain's work he expects for this. I doubt if he invests his money wisely ; but it's not his own, I'll swear.

SIR J. If you should see him leave the house, come here and tell me promptly.

SIMON. I will, Sir Jasper. [*Exit SIMON WISE.*]

SIR J. Are dreams prophetic, as in days gone by,  
When in their visions men read things to come?  
Or is it rather that the coward conscience,  
Inly divining its reward, creates  
The semblance of fulfilment. But last week  
I had a dream, that roused me from my rest  
And left me waking till the morn, and now  
The dream is all fulfilled. Nigh thirty years  
Have passed since once a wanton fool in Rome,  
Known by another name, I muttered through  
A marriage service. I as little cared  
For her I made my wife as any one  
Will care for that which serves a passing whim,  
And then forgets. 'Twas vilely done. 'Tis granted.  
But not all men with virtue are endowed  
Or kindly hearts. The prompting to good deeds,  
Like poet's fire or the painter's skill,  
Is more a gift of nature than men think.  
Men who are born with just and virtuous minds  
Are virtuous without pains ; those who possess  
A sordid soul to virtue disinclined

Grow only noble, warring night and day  
With such poor hearts as nature gave to them.  
Mine was but little framed for good men's deeds,  
And discipline ne'er mended nature's fault.  
And when we had been wedded for three months  
I had grown very weary of it all.  
One morn I sailed away, and none knew whither.  
I had almost forgotten that she lived,  
Till time by time some fear possessed me  
That she would find me for some deep revenge.  
I had no conscience left to loathe the deed,  
I only feared what penalties 'twould bring.  
For more than twenty years no word was breathed  
That spoke of that dark past; but on the day  
When that fond fool was finding in the chest  
My brother's will, he lighted on the deeds  
Drawn up before the wedding was gone through.  
That night the fear of twenty years became  
Reality. And shall an accident  
Frustrate the purpose of a life? Shall I  
Who have spent years of unremitting care  
To work my end, abandon all for this?  
Nay, rather she who comes a black memorial  
To bring to life again a hated past  
Shall serve a second object to destroy.

*Enter ANNE DARE and DONALD DARE, shown in  
by SIMON who goes out.*

SIR J. Lady, I humbly thank your courtesy

To one who has so well deserved neglect.

ANNE D. Sir Jasper Craven, or Sir Donald Dare,  
Or whatsoever name a lying life  
Befits you best to wear, I come to you ;  
Yet not to speak, as well I might, the scorn  
Your faithless villainy so well deserves ;  
But rather yielding to the earnest prayer  
Of him who has the fittest right to ask  
Why thus his father and his mother meet.

SIR J. It is of him I'd speak ; for I would try  
With some good service to redeem the past,  
A past I cannot ask him to forgive.

DON. 'Tis not for me to chide a father's fault,  
The rather let me praise a mother's virtue.  
Until we met, I had been taught to think,  
Not of a father who had wronged his home,  
But of a father honoured in his youth  
And cherished in his faithful memory,  
Whose life, ere yet his virtues were expressed,  
Like some bright morn that thick and sudden clouds  
Have blackened into night, had reached its eve  
Ere yet had come the sunny pride of noon,  
And passed away in silence of the grave.  
It was of such an one my mother told.  
And you, sweet mother, let not bygone wrongs,  
Of which I nothing know, nor care to know,  
So shut the present prospect from your mind,  
That you should lightly throw aside the peace

Of reconciliation.

SIR J.                               Bravely spoken, boy.  
I am not used with fair persuasion's arts  
To preface such entreaties as I make.  
Yet much I ask ; and had I grace of speech,  
I would such gift as I possessed employ.  
Now rather will I let sincerity  
And all the potent earnestness of truth  
Take place of these, and simply ask my boon.

ANNE D. To what you have to say of Donald here  
I'll listen patiently. I'll hear no more.  
A mother has no right to come between  
A father and his son, e'en when the wrongs  
That father did have darkened all her life.  
For me ask nothing, I shall nothing grant.

DON. Hear him, I pray you, ere you answer so.

SIR J. [*aside*]. Proud as she ever was. Such pride  
must fall.

[*Aloud.*] I have no boon to ask you for myself,  
It is for Donald and for Annabel.  
If I do not misread reports I hear  
Each loves the other. I would have them wed.  
For me—I'm old, and have not long to live ;  
Yet would I, ere I go, see Craven Hall,  
Which when they wed I will make all their own,  
What once it was, a peaceful, happy home.  
[*To DONALD.*] You love your cousin? Win her for  
your wife.

DON. Oh, sir! it is my first, my dearest wish.

SIR J. 'Tis very well; an hour hence return  
And we will keep the custom of our house,  
And see you duly and in form betrothed.  
I'll send the lady. *[Exit SIR JASPER CRAVEN.]*

ANNE D. I do not know if this be right or wrong.

DON. Why do you doubt? what could be kindlier  
said?

ANNE D. I do not trust him, for of old he was  
In promise fair, but faithless to fulfil.  
His greatest triumph is another's fall.  
As wanton boys will chase a butterfly,  
And in its sunny flight will beat it down,  
Then leave it marred and mangled, and bereft  
Of beauty, and go onward and forget,  
Naught caring for the life they have destroyed,  
So Jasper Craven does a cruel deed  
For simple pleasure of inflicting pain,  
Without the plea of inexperienced years.  
I cannot trust a change in him so great,  
That he should do my son a kindly deed.

DON. True love will never err, e'en though beset  
By all the power of evil influence.

ANNE D. Before I knew the race from which she  
came,  
I would have wished for you no fitter bride,  
And now for her sake I do not. And yet,  
Rather than you should wed one of his stock,

Would you were mated to a peasant girl.  
 Yet will I not your will oppose ; the maid  
 Is fair, and doubtless faithful as she's fair ;  
 I will not stay the bridal heaven ordains.

DON. There speaks my mother's never-failing heart.

ANNE D. God guide you right and keep you from  
 all ill. [Exit ANNE DARE.]

*Enter ANNABEL and SIMON WISE.*

[SIMON *is talking to ANNABEL as they come on.*

SIMON. May I tell you? [*Seeing DONALD.*] Eh!  
 perhaps you've no leisure to hear me now. Will  
 you hear it, sir? A quaint thing that I saw this  
 morning.

DON. What was it, Simon?

SIMON [*going to window and pointing*]. See you  
 yonder hound? 'Tis a simple, weakly mongrel ;  
 'twas christened after me. And yonder grisly fellow,  
 grey with age—that's his sire ; he's resting mostly in  
 a corner somewhere—not often to be seen. And  
 there's another there, a little white and fragile thing,  
 as innocent and as gentle as . . . as my mistress here ;  
 and there's another somewhere on the estate, a cun-  
 ning fox that will rob anybody ; he has a friend of  
 the same kidney, a neighbour's dog. This morn the  
 old fox seemed strangely pleasant with yon little thing,  
 and with the promise of a bone enticed it off. Then  
 comes his friend and quarrels with the helpless thing,  
 to steal its bone and torture it, it may be, for possess-



ing it ; but the mongrel there came with its sire just in the nick of time, and the good old fellow's threats were quite enough. The rascals ran for life. Poor little thing, she's got her bone now, and can keep it in peace. 'Twas the old dog did it. Canst read riddles, sir ?

DON. Not very well, and this one not at all.

SIMON. Didst ever look into a mirror, sir ?

DON. Aye, very oft.

SIMON. What did'st see there ? Thyself ?

No not thyself, but something very like.

[*Aside to DONALD.*] Fate prosper your wooing, sir.

[*Aside as he goes out.*]

The little story was not all in vain,

What has been once can surely be again.

[*Exit SIMON WISE.*]

DON. Dear Annabel, in future when we hear  
Men rail against the hard decrees of fate,  
And say, as they are ever wont to say,  
That destiny with boundless power endowed,  
Delights in each annoyance she inflicts ;  
Then, as becomes the votaries she has blessed,  
Will we right loyally defend her cause,  
And cite our happy instance in her praise.

AN. Hope, Donald, ever limns her pictures fair,  
And decks them out with colours rosy red ;  
But when in time we reach reality,  
We see the details harsh and cold and stern.

Hast seen Sir Jasper?

DON. I have, sweet cousin. You have judged him ill,  
His thoughts of you are kinder than you deem ;  
But now he left me ; wished my cause success,  
And bade my mother in an hour return,  
To see us fitly and in form betrothed.

AN. Hast ever heard of men and women, Donald,  
Who most avoid what most they love to meet ?  
I am of those ; and though the dearest joys,  
Of late, the only joys that I have known,  
Have sprung from sweetest intercourse with thee,  
Yet would to heaven—I speak the simple truth—  
Our lives had never crossed, or having crossed,  
You, heeding not, had never noted mine.  
The dear, dear memory, of when first you passed  
Along our sunny fields, I would keep that ;  
I love it so, I could not let it go.  
Yet would that that were all. When sorrow came,  
It would have been my solace through my life.  
Now each one winds about the other's heart,  
As ivy clings about its parent tree ;  
In tearing one perforce you wound them both.  
So all my sorrows will but sadden thee.

DON. Thy life has been so often lonely here,  
That something of the gloom of solitude  
Hangs ever round thee, and begets despair ;  
But pray you, dearest, thrust the veil aside,  
And so let in the quickening rays of hope.

Our union may gladden other lives than ours ;  
And in my mother's and Sir Jasper's heart  
May live again the love of other days ;  
And all may mingle in a home of peace  
Where every will is shaped in unison,  
Like joyous song birds in a forest glade  
When each pours forth an independent strain,  
And yet all blend in perfect harmony.  
So shall our wills be in a sweet accord.

AN. There is no place for me in such a home,  
For where mine uncle is 'twill rather be  
Like the unkindly and the barbarous den  
Where some poor song-bird, prisoned in a cage,  
Is taught for profit by a loveless hand.

DON. But I will give you all your freedom back,  
And let you forth to wander at your will.  
And though, sweet nursling of the woodland fields,  
You wing your flight to far-off favoured haunts,  
Yet I will rest, all trusting and secure,  
That not more surely shall the fair, still night  
Succeed the day, than faithful thou return.

AN. Oh ! Donald dearest, if all this could be,  
The joy of life would be too great for peace.

DON. It shall be so ; your life is mine to tend.  
I'll to my mother, and conduct her here  
To meet Sir Jasper as he did appoint.  
Fear not, my love, I'll make your future fair,  
Then wake, bright happy hope ! Adieu despair !

[*Exit* DONALD DARE

AN. Why will he make my heart beat high with hope.  
Can he be right? and will my uncle change  
His long neglect, and give me in its stead  
The dearest joys that earth can ever give?  
Oh if he should! Kind heaven grant he may.

*Enter SIR JASPER CRAVEN.*

SIR J. Come hither, Annabel. I have thought of late  
Much of thee, and the lonely life you lead.  
Come hither. I have made great plans for thee.  
I would that thou shouldst wed. Thou art the last,  
Thyself and Donald, of our race; 'twere ill  
That race should be forgot, and I would choose  
Before I die to hear in Craven Hall  
The pretty music of thy children's mirth.

AN. Oh, sir, I have but little thought to wed;  
Or if I have, the thought is yet so young  
That its existence is but scarce defined.

SIR J. Nay, nay, my child, the thought is old enough.  
Love grows, when fairly rooted, wondrous fast.  
You love your cousin. Will you wed him then?

AN. I have but known him for a week or two;  
And custom says 'tis wise by time to test  
And long experience a lover's truth,  
Before a maiden trusts herself to wed.

SIR J. [*slightly changing*]. You show more sense,  
girl, than I hoped from you.  
You say, and wisely, that a maid should wed  
With one whom long experience has proved true.

I'd have thee wed, but not with Donald Dare.  
I'll find a lover whose maturer years  
And tested worth shall warrant constancy.

AN. Perchance the lover you would choose is not  
The man I could pay court to. His love may be,  
Or may not, more matured, his choice perchance  
More constantly resolved ; but then 'twould be  
Not virtue but the course of nature made it so.  
When men grow old in years their passions grow  
But seldom ; or if some stray unseasonable  
Bloom take shape, it withers up and dies,  
As summer flowers sometimes long delayed  
Are blasted ere they blow by winter's chill.  
No, I would have my husband young and gay,  
Susceptible of beauty everywhere ;  
So, mingling with mankind, should he remain  
Loyal always in his love ; then there would be  
Some virtue in his constancy.

SIR J. No idle fooling, girl. I say I'd have thee wed,  
With whom, anon. My purpose is resolved,  
And when resolved, you know 'tis not my wont  
To have it thwarted by an idle whim.  
I have the wealth could make these drear old halls  
Ring out again with shouts of festival.  
If thou wilt wed the wooer of my choice,  
That wealth shall all be his. He whom I mean . . .

AN. I pray no more. I know what you would say,  
" Be Colonel Wayland's bride." Sir Jasper Craven,

You spoke to me but now of Donald Dare,  
And with a kindness feigned to disguise  
Your real intent, asked me to be his bride.  
He has my heart, and I will be his bride,  
Or live a lonely life. This other—thing—  
I loathe him and despise. Nay, rather I  
Would like some wretched captive maid of old,  
Taken in heathen war, be dragged away  
And decked to grace a cruel conqueror's bed,  
Than drink the poison of his foul caress.  
You dare to ask me this, and hope to win  
My tame consent to such unholy sin  
By bribe of proffered wealth ; of wealth whose name  
Serves only to recall his memory  
Whose once it was. With what my father gave,  
You hope to buy me to a deed of shame,  
Would rend his very grave with wild unrest.  
Your home I'll share no more—the dear old home,  
Where once whene'er I came a mother's love  
And father's welcome ever greeted me ;  
Where he would take me fondly on his knee,  
And call me some pet name, and while away  
The happy time with mirth and fabled tale.  
You mock the very memory of the days  
When I was cherished in their tender care.

SIR. J. Thy parents' fondness and my lack of love,  
It is a well worn theme. I tell thee, girl,  
Thy father . . . bah . . . begone,

Or I shall give account of his rare virtues,  
May do him ampler justice than you would.  
I am well resolved. Wed Colonel Wayland,  
And it will save you some remorse and pain ;  
Refuse, and I will force you to my will.

AN. Hope thou as soon to woo the winter's storm  
To change to sudden sunshine at your will,  
As my consent to your accurst request.

[*She goes towards door.*

SIR J. One moment stay, and when you've heard me  
out,

The storm, may be, will lull its angry rage.  
Perchance thou'st never heard in days gone by,  
Men called this Craven Hall a haunted house.  
Would'st hear the tale? Just thirty years ago,  
In this same very chair where now I sit,  
Thy father's mother sat.

[*Rises and takes dagger from cabinet.*

O'er yonder hearth

This dagger hung, that in the civil wars  
One of thy race wore ever at his side.  
One night she took it from its place, and there  
She plunged it to her heart, and there she died.  
And when men came to ask what grief and care  
Had made her weary of her life, they learnt  
It was thy father's greed who wished her dead,  
That he might squander all her wealth away.

AN. Sir Jasper Craven, as by law thou art

My guardian, I owe thee some respect.  
 Yet all I owe to thee is nothing worth  
 To that I owe my father's memory.  
 To him who never did an unkind deed,  
 Or had a selfish thought, thou bring'st a charge  
 Would shame the vilest, hardest wretch on earth.  
 That charge is made ; by every hope I have  
 To be hereafter where my father is,  
 Thou shalt with proof make all thy charges true ;  
 Or if thou can'st not, then thou shalt proclaim  
 To all the world how basely thou hast lied.

[SIR JASPER CRAVEN, *with mocking laugh,*  
*rings bell.*

*Enter COLONEL WAYLAND and SIMON WISE.*

[SIMON *enters a little after WAYLAND, unseen*  
*by any until the end of Act.*

SIR J. The paper, Wayland.

WAY. Is there no other course ?

SIR J. The paper. [*Takes paper from WAYLAND,*  
*and gives it to ANNABEL.*] This is your father's writ-  
 ing ; will you read ?

AN. [*reading paper*]. " Here, as I lie face to face  
 with death, my soul can find no peace till I write  
 this. I have striven long to take my secret with me  
 to the grave, but sleeping and awake my conscience  
 goads me to confess my crime. If not by my very  
 hand, by that that makes the guilt in all as great, I  
 caused my mother's death. One man in all the



world beside myself knows this. 'Tis Colonel Wayland. My dear, sweet Annabel, I pray that you may never hear of it. Yet if you do, for love of mercy and the honour of your house, protect your father's memory."

SIR J. You know the hand.

AN. Too well, alas! too well.

SIR J. You still refuse? Consent, and that dark record and all memory of it are buried in the past.

AN. Oh! my dear father, for your honour's sake, I give what I would change a thousand, thousand times with death. [*To WAYLAND.*] I will be your wife.

SIR J. 'Tis well. I had foreseen all this and made all due provision for the bridal. You will wed to-day.

AN. Oh heaven, I pray thee, be this prayer my last, Take, take my life, ere this dark day be past.

*Curtain.*

### ACT III. SCENE I.

SCENE.—*Another room in Craven Hall. Windows opening to the ground serve as central entrance. View of village church in the distance.*

SIMON *discovered.*

SIMON [*reading telegram*]. "Yours just received. As previously arranged, I rested here the night. Fear not. Attempt to prevent nothing. Sir Jasper Craven may do his worst. I shall be with you just in time." [*Putting away telegram.*] Colonel Wayland, you never spent money with such good and prompt effect as the few guineas you feed me with. A man grows strangely generous when he provides the means to buy a rope to hang himself withal. 'Twas a queer document he had [*produces paper used in Act II.*], but it had been wiser to have changed it with his coat. [*Looking at the paper.*] My dear, dead master, and they must needs, to work their wicked end, drag down your memory in the dirt. But it shall be kept clean yet. A villain's slander's worth a good man's praise. [*Puts paper in his pocket, goes to window and looks off, then looks at clock.*] 'Tis time he came or

he may be too late. But I can trust him, he will not fail me.

*Enter* SIR JASPER CRAVEN.

SIR J. Simon.

SIMON. Yes, Sir Jasper.

SIR J. Has Mistress Dare returned?

SIMON. Not yet, sir.

SIR J. Nor her son?

SIMON. No, sir.

SIR J. When they do, let me know instantly. And tell Newton to have the horses and carriage ready, and be himself prepared to start at a moment's notice. You understand?

SIMON. I do, Sir Jasper.

*[Exit* SIR JASPER CRAVEN.

SIMON. It's an excellent quality in a servant to be able to anticipate his master's wishes. I had foreseen the carriage might be needed, and as we have but two horses now, I turned them both out an hour ago in different directions. They are horses that are very fond of freedom. By now they're each at least five miles from here, and ten apart. There's exercise in store for Newton.

*Enter* ANNE DARE *and* DONALD DARE.

DON. [*to* SIMON]. Is your mistress in?

SIMON. I think not, sir.

DON. Know you where she is?

SIMON. Not well, sir. She'll be shortly back.

DON. You speak as knowing more than you will say.

SIMON. Well, to say truth, sir, she hath gone on a strange errand.

DON. What mean you?

SIMON. You mind the bird, sir, that my mistress keeps? her pet. 'Tis let to wander where it will. 'This morn it flew into its cage and fell asleep and had a hideous dream. It thought that for some fault it was condemned to stay there prisoned all its life. But when it woke it found the door open, and it was still free. That's something like my mistress' case. Another riddle, sir. Can you read that, sir?

DON. You're a merry fellow, but your wits at times work strangely. But you were always kind to your mistress. 'Tis a glad day to-day. Take this in memory of it. [*Offers gold.*]

SIMON. I thank you, sir; but will not take your gold. True kindness should be given, never sold. I mean no rudeness, sir. You'll pardon me?

DON. There's nought to pardon.

SIMON. May there never be.

[*Exit SIMON WISE.*]

DON. A strange but honest fellow, whose words are riddles, but whose deeds are simple acts of kindness the dullest well can read.

ANNE D. What meant he by his story of the bird that was, he said, like Annabel?

DON. I know not. Yes, I have it; why 'tis clear

enough : his mistress all these years that now are passed has like the bird been prisoned in a cage, but now on our betrothal day awakes to the sweet reality of freedom. Good Simon, it was wisely said.

ANNE D. Meant he no more ?

DON. More, nay, what more could he mean ?

ANNE D. I know not, but I think 'twas more than that.

*Enter* SIR JASPER CRAVEN.

SIR J. My welcome on your happy errand both.  
Your cousin follows ; she'll be here forthwith.  
I would not have this union arranged  
To gratify my wish. You love your cousin ?

DON. I love her, sir, so well, to love her not  
Were not to live. I love her, sir, so well  
That if an envious fate should bar the way,  
As fate by proverb stays the course of love,  
I can conceive no obstacle so great  
That I would not surmount it. With such love,  
And all things ministering so sweetly to it,  
I deem me blest indeed.

SIR J. 'Tis very well.  
You are assured your love is all returned ?

DON. I know it from the guileless lips of her  
Who could not promise what she would not keep.  
Still more I know it by the thousand signs  
That love like mine can never read awrong.

SIR J. 'Tis very well. [*To ANNE D.*] Brings this  
no joy to you?

ANNE D. What brings to Donald joy, brings peace  
to me.

[*Sound heard in the distance of marriage bells.  
All pause and listen.*]

ANNE D. What mean those bells?

SIR J. It is a custom old  
To ring them when a Craven is betrothed.

DON. A custom well observed. Their melody  
Doth sweetly match with sound of lovers' vows.

[*Short pause, the bells still ringing.*]

*Enter COLONEL WAYLAND and ANNABEL.*

[*ANNABEL is dressed in bridal dress and is in  
great distress. ANNE DARE and DONALD  
look at each other in surprise. SIR JASPER  
listens with a mocking smile.*]

DON. Why, why this dress? What mean you,  
Annabel?

WAY. It means, sir, that this lady is my wife.

DON. Speak, Annabel. What means this masquerade?

[*ANNABEL tries to speak but fails.*]

DON. When last I left you words of burning love  
Fell from your lips. You stand before me now  
Another's wife. Oh! speak in pity's name.  
And tell me, Annabel, it is not true.

[*ANNABEL again tries to speak, but after an  
effort again fails.*]

ANNE D. Spare your reproaches, Donald. Fit it is  
That words should fail when thus the heart betrays.

This lady is a Craven. In her veins  
Flows the false stream that poisons all her race,  
And breeds deceit and treachery where it flows.

[*To SIR J.*] Cruel and heartless as when years ago,  
With gentle words and vows of constancy,  
You wooed and won me in another land,  
To leave me loveless and neglected there ;  
So this fair-seeming daughter of your house  
Has toyed and trifled with a good man's heart.  
Could not one victim glut your cruelty ?

For you who for your sport have wrecked my life,  
May heaven reward you as you have deserved.

[*To ANNABEL.*] For you whose feignèd love and cold  
deceit

Has killed or sought to kill a noble life,  
As true and trusting as thine own is false,  
The darkest curse that can to woman come  
Fall on you. . . . Love and sympathy  
Your joyless life ne'er lighten. May you die  
As you have lived, uncared for and unwept.

AN. I have deserved it all ; yet if you knew  
What cruel need controls my wretched fate,  
E'en you would know some touch of gentle pity.

SIR J. [*to ANNE D.*] For all your wishes my re-  
spectful thanks.

For that wherein you wished me some amends

For wrongs I've done to you, I heed it not.  
For that wherein you piously besought  
Despair for Annabel, by happy chance  
For once our wills agree. 'Twill save, maybe,  
Misunderstanding if I briefly state  
What led to this, and how it came about.  
First, for yourself. Near thirty years ago  
I left you; and to save you doubt and pain  
I wrote and bade you never seek me more.  
You should have known 'twas wiser to obey.  
For Annabel; her father won the love  
Of her whom I had purposed for my wife,  
And took from me the only living thing  
I ever prized. So when the tidings came  
That there was born to them a little child,  
I vowed—and somehow I respect the vows  
I make—that I would some day mar her life,  
And so take vengeance for the wrong they did.  
This happy day's the triumph of my plan.  
The man whose name she now by law doth bear  
Is no chance friend, but one whose constancy  
I've long and often tried. 'Tis our intent  
To make her life as full of misery  
As even you could wish. I pray you then,  
In full assurance that your will's fulfilled,  
Go, leave us to our task. [Rings bell.]

*Enter* SIMON WISE.

SIR J.

At once conduct



This lady and her son beyond the gates.

SIMON. Your pardon, Sir Jasper, I'm 'most afraid to go.

SIR J. Afraid, fellow! How? begone.

SIMON. Chief of all fears I ever had, sir, has been a wholesome dread of ghosts.

SIR J. What mean you, knave?

SIMON. Why just this, Sir Jasper, I've found a document. [*Produces paper used in Act II.*] 'Tis a document refers to my old master. [SIR JASPER and WAYLAND start.] What moves me most is this, Sir Jasper. 'Tis just a fortnight since, I went to the library to write a message. I found a sheet of paper and began; but I had only written two words when I bethought me of a safer means of sending my message; so I put the paper back. But for the two words I wrote, I swear the paper then was clear. Now on the other side of it there's something written in my old master's hand and signed with my old master's name. Now he's been dead these thirteen years. Hence my fears, Sir Jasper; there must be ghosts in Craven Hall.

SIR J. This is your cursed blundering, Wayland.

DON. Give me the paper; let me read it, quick.

SIMON [*giving paper to DONALD*]. Oh heed it not, sir. It's every word false; there's no liar so accomplished as your ghost.

DON. This is some forged and devilish device.

[*To ANNABEL.*] Great heaven ! it was by this written lie  
They lured and drove you to this last extreme.

AN. [*to WAYLAND.*] I charge you tell me as you  
hope yourself  
For any need of mercy for your wrong,  
Are these my father's words ?

WAY. 'Twas writ by me.

AN. Then hear me both. By forged and damnèd lies,  
In craft as cunning, and in guilt as great  
As that whereby in paradise of old  
The serpent robbed our parents of their peace,  
You've made me this man's wife. 'Fore heaven I swear  
'Tis but a bond in name. You, Colonel Wayland,  
Shall live to see her whom you've made your wife  
Drag you to just tribunal for your crime.  
And yet I hold you, hated as you are,  
Less vile than him whose most unnatural spleen  
Has used you for his ends. Both I defy,  
And both shall learn to what most dire extreme  
A woman's vengeance reaches when she's wronged.

ANNE D. [*who has read paper, going to ANNABEL.*]  
Forgive me, Annabel, my angry haste.

SIR J. I fear this boisterous and sudden rage  
Is scarcely fitting for a new-made bride.  
Your threats are vain. You still are Wayland's wife.  
You best had make such change in your attire  
As travel needs. [*To SIMON WISE.*] Tell Newton  
to bring round  
The carriage. [*Exit SIMON WISE.*]

DON. [*to SIR JASPER.*] You have no longer right  
By your command to shape my cousin's course.

That right her husband only may assume.

[*To WAYLAND.*] And you, sir, if by virtue of the  
bond,

Compelled by lies, contracted in deceit,

You rob this lady of her own free will,

Expect to render an account to me.

WAY. I do not fear you.

*Enter SIMON WISE.*

SIR J. [*to ANNABEL.*] You will start at once.

SIMON. Your pardon, Sir Jasper, but before my  
mistress goes there's one without that claims that he  
has weighty news for you.

*Enter OLD SIMON WISE.*

SIR J. And who is that?

OLD S. You do not know me, then, Sir Jasper  
Craven?

SIR J. I know you? No! begone. What brings  
you here?

OLD S. Time was, sir, when you knew me well  
enough.

SIR J. That voice! Who is it? Speak you from  
the grave?

Who is it, Simon, thus unbidden comes?

SIMON. 'Tis my old father, sir, your servant once;  
Yet not unbidden, for I bade him come.

SIR J. You told me, fellow, he had long been dead.

OLD S. And so I would that you had ever thought;  
For well I knew, if need should bring me back,  
That I must bear such witness of the past,  
The house where I had spent such happy days,  
Must echo with the guilty tales of woe.  
Of that anon. [*To WAYLAND.*] My errand's first to  
you.

Colonel Wayland, to a shameless life,  
This is a fitting end. I've news for you  
That will, unless your cruel heart be shut  
To every form of good, be news of joy,  
Not all unmixed with pain. 'Tis fourteen years  
Since by the arts you can so well employ,  
You lured a poor man's daughter from her home;  
'To you sometimes do better moments come.  
In one of these you made the child your wife,  
And, being good, repented ere 'twas done.

WAY. No need to tell your story to the end,  
The present guilt whereof I am condemned  
Needs not the addition of my bygone wrongs.

OLD S. Oh! that I could leave all the tale untold.  
She went with you to Russia, and when there  
You hired two scoundrels bolder than yourself  
To rid you of her; for a bag of gold  
They did contract to take away her life.  
But mercy mingles with the cruellest.  
They spared her life, and told you she was dead;  
She wandered to her home in time to see

Her father's grave new-filled ; for at the last  
The child's dishonour broke the strong man's heart.  
She, fearing she should fall into your hands,  
Kept her existence secret from the world ;  
I only knew she lived ; yet still she lives  
Your lawful wedded wife. The marriage vows  
You spoke but now in yonder village church,  
Are void and empty ; and this lady here  
Is still as free as when she entered it.

AN. Oh, happy tidings ! joy, unhopèd-for joy !

DON. How have I wronged you, dearest, in my  
thought.

Oh ! fate is kind to such disastrous woe,  
That brings such fortunate unlookèd-for end.

WAY. At any cost I greet the happy chance  
That frees me from my loathsome part in this.  
Craven, your secret that has kept me bound  
Your slave in villany is no secret more.

SIR J. Wayland, we are worsted everywhere.  
You have not in you metal to die true.  
You are but fit to creep to some lone place  
And whine away your life in penitence.  
Yet take for comfort when you meditate  
My estimation of your services.  
You did aspire to a villain's prize,  
That strong will only and keen wits may win,  
And cringed and covered at your first reverse.  
While still the chance remains make good retreat ;

And, Wayland, if we e'er should meet again,  
I'll do the world some little service yet,  
And make it richer by the loss of you.

WAY. No. I will never give you chance to add  
Another to your crimes. The wretched bond  
By which you held me is for ever broke.  
And may I in the years that still remain  
Make some amends for all my guilty past.

[*Exit* COLONEL WAYLAND.]

OLD S. I hope so from my heart. [*To* SIR JASPER.]  
For this false charge  
With which you slandered your good brother's memory,  
May pardon come to you. A nobler man  
Or juster to the end I never knew.

SIR J. Thy praises may be true. I heed them not.

OLD S. You thought me dead. You might well  
wish it so,  
That there should be no memory to recall  
Your guilty share in a most shameful past.  
The wretched story of your mother's death  
That you have told to Mistress Annabel  
Tell o'er again, and where your brother's name  
Then stood, put yours; and then you will have told  
But half the truth; for as she helpless lay  
In anguish, prostrate by her bleeding wound,  
She told me how she came by it.

[SIR JASPER *glares round and moves towards him.*]

Fear not,  
To save your honour was her chief concern.

I'll bear no witness 'gainst your mother's son,  
Or my old master's brother.

ANNE D. [*to SIR JASPER, coming forward*]. You are  
curst

With other blindness blacker than the blank  
That shuts from those dark eyes the light of day ;  
A blindness that has fallen on your heart,  
And taught you heaven would stand silent by  
While you maligned the memory of the dead.

OLD S. I was beside him when he died, Sir Jasper ;  
And after fit disposal of his goods  
There faded from his face all trace of care,  
And came such indications of great joy,  
As gleams at day-dawn on the seaman's face,  
When, as the tempest lulls itself to rest,  
He sees the coast-line of his native land ;  
And in his eyes a glad expectant light.

SIR J. Aye, I remember it. Yet brooks it not  
To call the picture back ; nor fits it you  
With cold complacent scorn to taunt and mock ;  
Nor in your self-assumed security  
To show the gulf-divided peace of heaven  
To the rich man tortured in the rack of hell.  
Ill-mannered loon, go ! leave me to myself  
Whatever end await me, heed you not.  
I'll meet it as I may. [*Exit SIR JASPER CRAVEN.*]

ANNE D. Is this the man  
Who came to me in olden days when I

Did deem me blest and happy in his love?  
 Oh! could I teach him for their memory's sake  
 To look for pardon ere it be too late.

[*Going after him.*]

SIMON [*detaining her*].

Your pardon, mistress, it were best to stay.  
 The strong man drowning when his sense grows wild  
 Will clutch and ruin whatever tries to save.

DON. Good Simon's right. If some more pliant  
 mood

Should, as it may, in lapse of time, succeed  
 His present hard and unrelenting heart,  
 Then may entreaty move; 'twere useless now.

AN. [*to OLD SIMON*]. But knew my father aught of  
 what you say?

OLD S. He knew his mother died by violence,  
 For which he did account by some upsetting  
 Of the mind's just balance. He was too true  
 To think his brother could do such a wrong.  
 And well that it was so. For had he known  
 The unnatural crime that took his mother's life,  
 It would have marred the sweet and holy peace  
 That when he died lit up his still calm face.  
 Well I remember it. You, mistress, then  
 A little fair-haired child of seven years,  
 Climbed softly on the bed, and, knowing not,  
 Entwined your tiny arms about his neck,  
 And nestled at his side. And there you lay,



Death and a dawning life in beauteous contrast.  
 And thou wast beautiful, and yet was death  
 The fairer of the two. God give thee grace,  
 Dear mistress, and me, too, to die a death like his.

AN. I never thought on earth to know again  
 The joy you bring. For all your services,  
 My true and noble friend.

[*Turning to speak to SIMON as well as to OLD  
 SIMON.*

And for yours too,  
 A life that makes your future lot its care  
 Shall be my thanks. For never did there come,  
 In prison den to wretch condemned to die,  
 The news of pardon with a sweeter joy  
 Than this that gives me all my freedom back,  
 And leaves my father's cherished memory dear  
 From this dark stain of evil free and clear.

DON. Oh! luckless chance, that I my being owe  
 To him who brought to thee such piteous woe.

AN. Not yours the fault; yet this for comfort take,  
 You and you only can amendment make.

SIMON [*half aside to DONALD*].  
 The old dog did it, sir; you mind the time  
 I told my tale? There's reason in my rhyme.

*Enter SIR JASPER CRAVEN.*

[*He makes a pause at the back; unseen by all  
 he drinks poison from a phial which he  
 carries; then comes slowly forward.*

SIR J. 'Tis not my custom, as you know full well,  
With large entreaty to prefer request.  
I rather have enforced them than besought.  
Yet one the last, as it has been the first,  
In justice grant. [*To ANNABEL.*] If in the years to  
come,

As you rehearse the annals of your house,  
Your little children listening at your knee,  
Should light upon the name of Jasper Craven,  
In no false fiction framed in charity  
Condone the countless vices of his life ;  
But paint them grim and hideous as they were.  
Nay, boast thou rather 'twas his chiefest pride  
That one fixed purpose guided all his life ;  
That when he failed, himself did so despise  
Himself for having failed, he scorned to live.

*[His voice has grown weaker ; the poison be-  
ginning to take effect, he drops phial ; the  
others approach, but he motions them off.]*

That as alone he lived, so all alone  
He chose to die. And I would have you add,  
That as he died, his latest thoughts of all,

*[Growing weaker and weaker he falls ; looks  
up with a last effort.]*

Were curses that—he—had—no strength—to speak.

*Curtain.*

A Fair Conquest.

A DRAMATIC EPISODE.

IN ONE ACT

*CHARACTERS.*

SIR HORACE.

PAUL RAYMOND.

HESTER GRANT.

*Scene—An Artist's Studio.*

*Time—The Present.*

SCENE.—*Paul's studio. Busts, fragments of coloured drapery, &c., carelessly disposed about the room. Two or three easels, one a large one; on the large one a picture partly painted.*

HESTER *discovered seated at table, working at a small picture. She is dressed in the costume of a Spanish girl.*

HES. [*pausing and looking at picture*].

How grows the power when the earnest will  
To win success directs the careful hand;  
How doubly grows it when a woman's love  
Whispers beside her in her patient toil,  
"Success in this may win the heart you yearn for."  
I could not thus have painted sky and trees  
A year ago. But then a year ago  
He never stood beside me as I worked,  
And, looking praise, said, "This or that was good,"  
Or, "This needs mending," showed me how to mend,  
And made me love the very faults I made,  
In that they won for me his dear correction.

*Enter PAUL.*

PAUL. What, Hester! still at work? You must be weary.

"All work," you know, the honest proverb says,  
"Makes Jack a dullard;" and the truth will hold  
With girls as well as boys.

HES.                                      They say, sir, too,  
That change of work is all as good as play.

PAUL [looking at his picture].  
Shall we go on? Does kneeling weary you?

HES. [Aside.]  
Do pilgrims weary kneeling 'fore their saints?  
[Aloud.] Indeed, sir, no.

PAUL.                                      You're very patient, child,  
And poorly paid. Take this [offers coins]; 'tis not  
thy wage,  
But something over for the pains you take.  
I had good fortune yesterday.

HES.                                      I do not need it, sir,  
I have been lucky too.

PAUL.                                      Why, what good chance  
Has come to you that you should scoff at gold?  
'Tis not the custom of your calling.

[HESTER turns away, hurt.]  
Nay, pardon me, I would not be unkind;  
You have a little brother sick at home,  
'Twill buy some luxury to gladden him.

HES. Indeed, I do not need it, sir. To-day  
A gentleman, who years ago had known  
My father when he worked in Cumberland,  
And came to see my brother, chanced upon

A little sketch I made when I went there  
 To see my father. It was near his home,  
 And he remembered it ; the cross-ways in a wood,  
 Great oaks above and tangled brake below,  
 With fern and primrose and anemone,  
 And one small opening in the leafy roof  
 Through which the sun's slant rays streamed down  
 To light the trysting place for butterflies.  
 I used to play there when I was a child.  
 He bought the picture, and I go to-night  
 To take it to him.

PAUL [*looking at picture*]. And is this your work?  
 Why, Hester, you will come to fame, and rest  
 Secure upon its far-observèd heights,  
 While I am toiling, doubtful of success,  
 Along its rugged path.

[*Puts picture on a small easel, and looks at it ;  
 pause, then goes to his own large picture.*]

To-day will be  
 A day to be remembered in my life,  
 I must not spend it idly. I have not told you.  
 I would the picture were complete. My future,  
 Its failure or success, may hang upon it.  
 The road of life that all men pass along  
 Doth often branch in two diverging ways,  
 And chance or choice directs the path we take.  
 The choice sometimes makes little difference ;  
 This leads along a pleasant meadow path,

And that a rough and solitary lane.  
 Yet both soon open on the same highway.  
 But sometimes do the two diverging ways  
 Grow more and more apart, and lead straight on  
 To different regions. He who goes by this  
 Will meet no more with him who chooses that.  
 Each region has its several opportunities ;  
 And each occasion may make one man great  
 Or blest, and yet may never help another.  
 'Tis when at such a point along the way  
 A man stands halting, wondering which to take,  
 Good fortune guides or leaves him free to choose.  
 I stand before such prospect, child, to-day,  
 My course to-morrow will be fixed upon.

*[During this he has been painting at intervals.]*

HES. If I were only wise enough, I'd pray  
 I had the power to decide your path.

PAUL. May be you have some power. Who can tell?  
 A little breeze will shape a vessel's course.

HES. I, power? how?

PAUL. This picture, this is you.  
 There comes here one to-day to look at it,  
 Whose commendation may make me secure ;  
 His "yes" or "no" may mark my future out.

HES. Is he some patron, sir? or some critic  
 Whose spoken verdict satisfies the world ;  
 Whose praise may bring you wealth, esteem, and fame?

PAUL. Wealth truly ; gold cannot outweigh content ;



Esteem, for sometimes praise from one exceeds  
A world's applause.

HES. I would that I were such a critic, sir.  
Your wealth should be so great 'twould bring you fame;  
Your fame so wide you should not prize your wealth.  
The painter's worth in general esteem  
Yield only to the merits of the man.

[PAUL looks fixedly at her; pause for a few  
moments, during which he is painting.]

PAUL. This needs more colour.

[Takes up coloured scarf and gives to her.]

Go to your room and fold  
This scarf around you. Let your hair more loosely,  
And plait these roses there.

[Gives roses from his coat; her eyes brighten  
as she takes them. [Exit HESTER.]

[As she goes she puts the roses to her lips.]

PAUL [looking at HESTER'S picture on small easel].

She painted this!

Success was never yet more justly due  
To steadfast labour and a fixed resolve.  
If genius be, as some men say it is,  
Akin to care, then genius wrought this.

Enter HESTER.

HES. Will this do, sir? Are they rightly placed?

PAUL. No pains could mend the art that placed  
them there.

And yet it seems not art; rather as though

Discerning nature that has reared the plant,  
 And seen the shapely form unfold itself,  
 And leaf and branch in just proportion spring,  
 Spreading the blossom with her dainty hand,  
 Had crowned her work and made perfection perfect.

HES. Flattery, that o'ersteps the bounds of truth,  
 And only shows the merit we have missed,  
 Condemns less kindly that mere honest blame.

PAUL. And modesty that makes the praise that's due  
 Seem merely flattery, deserves more praise  
 Than flattery can bestow. Shall we go on?

*[She goes to her place, and he to his pictures.]*

*Enter a SERVANT, who takes a card to PAUL.*

PAUL. I will be down directly. *[Exit SERVANT.]*

HES. Shall I go?

PAUL. And wherefore go? It is the visitor  
 Of whom I spoke. If he condemn my work  
 'Twill be some compliment to my wise choice,  
 If he commend the model I have chosen.

*[Exit PAUL.]*

HES. Why sounds the approval he so lightly speaks  
 Unlike all else? When other men commend,  
 I hear it and forget. Each word of his,  
 Like some dear memory of departed joy,  
 Comes back at will and lights my solitude.  
 Love, of all passions that possess the heart,  
 Most cruel, cherished most, whose mastery  
 So holds the trembling victim in its toils

That, like a wild bird in a net ensnared,  
 She winds, with every struggle to be free,  
 The meshes closer round. Yet if she hath  
 The power to be free she closer clings  
 To the sweet bondage of its dear control.  
 The maid who loves with unreturnèd love,  
 Like one who drowns, holds out a pleading hand  
 To what could help, yet will not hear its cry ;  
 Yet, yearning only for the ungiven help,  
 Still holds in vain entreaty out the hand  
 That well-directed could deliverance make.  
 Goes such love unrewarded ? Think it not  
 Here, or hereafter in some world unknown,  
 All love shall meet its counterpart. The heart  
 That sighs in unregarded solitude  
 Strikes but the prelude to some far-off strain,  
 That kindred hearts in harmony shall fill.

*Enter SIR HORACE and PAUL.*

PAUL [*speaking to SIR HORACE as they come in*].  
 I hoped the work would be complete by now.

SIR H. You have a most convenient place for work.  
 And this ? [*Indicating HESTER.*]

PAUL. Is Hester Grant, my model, sir,  
 Whose chiefest fault is a too trusting faith  
 In his poor powers that paints her.

SIR H. I like the fault.  
 And if her faith in you is as sincere  
 As hers should be, whose face proclaims herself

Endowed with all sincerity, you will do well  
If you deserve it.

HES.                    You speak too kindly, sir.

*Enter SERVANT, who takes card to PAUL and goes out.*

PAUL. You'll pardon me, Sir Horace. Hester here  
Will show you something of my work. [*Exit PAUL.*

SIR H. Your occupation must be wearisome ;  
And if so short acquaintance may presume  
To say so, I should deem you not unfit  
For nobler work.

HES.                    I am contented, sir.

SIR H. And has my young friend often had your help?

HES. For full two years, a month has scarcely passed,  
I've not been here ; and oft for days together.  
He's painted me a score of times or more—  
A Grecian slave-girl draped in classic robe ;  
A way-worn beggar, poor and meanly clad ;  
And once, sir, as the warrior maid in armour,  
Glittering white, her banner in her hand,  
Who fought for France at Orleans.  
And when he painted that, a face so full  
Of constancy and high resolve—those eyes,  
Lit with a light less human than divine,  
I almost grew to think that I was fair  
Who had inspired such a picture. I forgot  
The story of Canova—forgot that genius,  
Catching the form and fashion of its model,  
Yet adds thereto a beauty and a grace

Born of itself alone.

SIR H. I warrant when thou stood'st arraying thee,  
A fairer picture looked out from thy mirror  
Than Paul's canvas ever bore. Did I hear  
Thy name aright ?

HES. 'Tis Hester Grant, Sir Horace.

SIR H. Is this thy native place ?

HES. Oh, no, sir, I was born far, far from here,  
In a little village on the rough north coast.

SIR H. At Sevondale ?

HES. You know our village, sir ?

SIR H. I have been there. I saw your father once,  
Or I mistake. They called him Humphrey Grant ?

HES. You knew him, sir ? In this distant place  
To meet with one who can recall his name  
Brings back old memories ; and, like a sunny vale  
That far away peeps out between the hills  
That else hide all the landscape, I can see,  
Passing the later years unnoted by,  
Only the little home he made so bright.

SIR H. He had a life-boat station, had he not ?

HES. Yes. I lived there till I was twelve years old ;  
A strange wild life, and yet I loved the place.  
Days, weeks would pass, and no one to be seen  
But two or three who were my father's mates.  
But now and then, when all were still asleep,  
The wind would moan among the cliffs, and we  
Were up and looking out to sea. The breeze

Would lull awhile as if to gather strength,  
 Then hiss and roar in loud and long lament ;  
 Great rain-drops fell, first slowly, then so fast,  
 Like whips of steel they lashed the heaving sea ;  
 And the swift lightning rent the dull black sky,  
 And lit the foam crests of the tossing waves ;  
 And rolling thunder boomed, and crashed, and  
 boomed again.

Then signals from a vessel in distress ;  
 And then my father and the strong brave lads  
 That worked with him would man the boat in haste,  
 And vanish in the night—and I looked out to sea.’

SIR H. Do you remember when the Sphinx went  
 down ?

HES. And shall, sir, while I live. Scenes that would  
 make  
 The face turn pale, the heart stand still with terror,  
 Were common on our coast. And yet of all,  
 I can remember that was most terrible.  
 Children orphaned, searching for their friends,  
 Women weeping in their solitude ;  
 And one poor mother that had seen her babe  
 Sink at her side, her reason overthrown,  
 Crouched on the shore, and sang a lullaby,  
 There was no bairn to listen to.

SIR H. In that wreck  
 I had a friend, the dearest friend I had,  
 More than a brother, saved in your father’s boat.

'Twas then I saw him, and I shall esteem  
Myself most fortunate if any boon  
That I can grant may benefit his child.

HES. We lonely dwellers by the envious sea,  
That did beguile its caverns of their prey,  
Oft with the tribute of a thankful heart,  
Were richly blest. One wild and angry night  
My father saved a little drowning child ;  
Its mother, gratefully importunate,  
For five years sent me to a neighbouring school,  
And opened up to me another world.  
So I who, like my father, would refuse  
A benefit conferred upon myself,  
May yet be bold to ask it for another.  
If you will help whom you have means to help,  
I shall be bounden with a larger debt  
Than you to him that helped to save your friend.

SIR H. What is it I can do ?

HES. You come to-day  
With power to advance my master, sir,  
To help him on to fame. But help him so,  
And I will bless you with my latest breath.

SIR H. You plead for him with more than com-  
mon zeal.

How has he been so favoured as to win  
Your interest ?

HES. [*forgetting herself*]. How? Ask you how  
the sun

Compels all flowers that its rays can reach  
 To bend toward it? Why do I plead? Because  
   [*Changing her manner.*

Because I have a brother sick at home,  
 And he is kind to him. Pray you grant the boon.

SIR H. Of all good virtues that possess the heart,  
 I do esteem a grateful memory,  
 And I would do your bidding. But kindness  
 Must be just, and I must shape my answer  
 To his merits. But let me see his work.

  [*Goes to large picture on easel.*

He painted this? What is the subject, child?

HES. A Spanish maiden waiting to be told  
 Her lover's fate. Within the arena there  
 He fights in deadly combat with the bull.

SIR H. 'Tis well expressed. Why, child, your face  
                                   betrays

An interest in my judgment of his work  
 As keen as hers who listens at the gate  
 Of the arena.

HES.                                   Do not heed it, sir ;  
 You like the painting, do you not ?

SIR H.                                   Yes,  
 I like it ; there's some promise in the work,  
 But he must show more certain merit yet  
 Before I can entirely commend.

                                  [*Goes to HESTER'S picture on smaller easel.*

Is this another? Let me look at it.



Why, this to that is blossom to the bud ;  
 Nay, more, for that will never grow to this.  
 There talent that may never rise to more  
 Appears. Here genius speaks in every line,  
 In that he did not choose his subject well.  
 Henceforward let him paint the trees and fields,  
 And fame will follow. He who painted that  
 Must win success. I'll tell him I have seen  
 His work and gladly answer "Yes."

HES. [*aside*]. My work  
 Win him success ! In all my wildest hopes  
 I never thought to win so dear a prize.

[*Aloud.*] Oh, sir, I thank you. May I ask one boon  
 Beyond ?

SIR H. What is it ?

HES. Let him not be told  
 Which picture pleased you. That has cost him weeks  
 Of toil and thought, while this was but the fruit  
 Of some two idle hours. If he should learn  
 So light an effort wins the greater prize,  
 He may grow somewhat sparing of his pains  
 And work at random.

SIR H. Wisely reasoned, child.  
 I'll tell him how, not why, I have decided.  
 Stay ! know you what it is I can confer ?

HES. Appreciation of his work ; their praise  
 That painter's prize the most ; esteem and fame.

SIR H. All that may be, but something more beside.

You pleaded with such zeal on his behalf,  
The tale may interest. I'll tell it you.  
Paul Raymond was my only sister's child :  
He had a brother older than himself  
By some five years ; a painter like himself.  
While he was still but scarce a boy in years,  
Depending on his labour for his bread,  
He wooed and won a maiden young as he,  
And they were wed. I would not speak her ill,  
For she was virtuous and true to him ;  
Yet as unfit to share his struggling life  
As the frail blossoms of her bridal wreath,  
Reared in the heat of summertide, to bear  
The keen cold envy of December.  
Then came three years of want and misery ;  
What pleasèd her had little charm for him,  
What moved him most was trivial to her ;  
Yet each one strove—for honour swayed them both—  
To hide from each the other's lack of love.  
At last the poor, frail semblance of a love  
Broke down—and soon two wasted lives,  
Full of high promise, of fulfilment void,  
Wore out in wedded solitude. The grass  
Had scarcely grown where he was laid to rest,  
When Paul and I stood watching by the bed  
Where my poor sister, sick with broken hope,  
Lay at the point of death. Before she died  
She asked of him a promise, which he gave ;

And thus it ran : " Dear Paul, as you would know  
 My latest moments hallowed with content,  
 Tell me that never while my brother lives  
 You will ask maiden to become your wife  
 Without his clear consent." And then to me :  
 " I pray you, brother, never give consent  
 Until he finds a maid that you can trust.  
 Nor then, until he has so far advanced  
 In art, that he can earn wherewith to make  
 A home for both." It is for this I come.  
 Paul tells me of a lady he would ask  
 To be his wife. Of her I have no doubt.  
 My duty is to-day to estimate  
 His work and skill ; from that to learn if yet  
 He has fulfilled his mother's last condition,  
 And can for both provide a fitting home.  
 That picture has decided me.

[*Pointing to HESTER'S painting.*] Wealth waits  
 For him who painted that.

[*Exit SIR HORACE.*]

HES. [*going up to her picture*].

Poor work of mine, at which to toil was joy.  
 How little did I dream that every line  
 I painted went to fill, in all the book  
 Of fate, for me the most unhappy page.

[*Goes to chair at table.*]

When first I 'gan to paint, a strange self-trust  
 Oft whispered, " Work, thou surely shalt succeed."  
 How fondly I looked onward to the day

When my success should give me rank with those  
In that great world of art where merit makes  
Compeers of all. O how I loved to think  
That then 'twould be no wrong to love the man  
Till then I knew I had no right to love.  
And now the very day that brings success  
Puts out of reach what most I prized it for.  
Yet in the after years when I shall see  
Him mated to the maiden of his choice ;  
And my life wears in long monotony,  
A widowed maid that never was a wife,  
When I shall hear the world proclaim his worth,  
And she made happy in the general praise  
That most he prizes when it makes her proud ;  
Sometimes shall come the memory of to-day,  
And what my work has helped to win for him.  
In my lone life 'twill be some joy to know  
How blest is his—and how she makes it blest.  
And yet—and yet I would have given him  
A heart as true, a love as deep as hers.  
And if adversity had ever come,  
How gladly had I spent my life to make  
His loss the less, and toiled all night and day  
That he might never miss prosperity ;  
All labour had been light and joy to bear  
That made one little burden easier  
For him, or won from him one look of love.

*[She takes from her dress one of the flowers  
PAUL gave her, kisses it and bursts into tears.]*

*Enter SIR HORACE and PAUL.*

SIR H. What, weeping, child! why surely it is strange  
To ask a boon, and, when 'tis granted you,  
To tell your thanks with tears. Have you no words  
To greet my nephew in his new-found joy?

PAUL. To-day has brought me such a store of glad-  
ness,  
I would have no sad faces 'bout the house  
To lessen it.

HES. Indeed, sir, if my words  
Could make it greater, I would spare them not.  
If my poor prayers can make your bridal blest,  
Then it shall be recorded of your life  
That sorrow never o'er your threshold passed,  
But as it went left peace and hope behind,  
And while it lingered strengthened all the bonds  
That bound your wife and you; no joys for one  
The other did not share; and when at last  
Old age comes on, you shall look back together  
On a long life filled up with worthy deeds,  
With love that ripening in the lapse of time  
Shall be perfected in eternity.

PAUL. Amen to all thy prayers; for so shall come  
All good to you and me. Come hither, Hester.  
You know that I have won the right to-day  
To plead my love with her I've lived to win.  
But you alone can crown the victory.

HES. I crown it? How?

PAUL [*taking her hand*]: Dear Hester, has your heart  
 Ne'er murmured echo of unspoken words  
 That mine has shaped in everything but voice.  
 It is to you I've won the right to plead.  
 Hester, dearest, for a whole year past  
 I've lived for only you ; but till to-day,  
 Bound by a promise sacred as my love,  
 I could not tell my love

[*After a moment's pause he takes her in his arms.*]

HES. Dear, dearest Paul.

PAUL. And sometimes, as I looked into your eyes.  
 Methought I read, in language whose sweet truth  
 Mocked at the paltry eloquence of words,  
 The happy story of requited love.  
 Tell me, Hester, did I read aright ?

HES. Or else these eyes do much belie the heart  
 That speaks through them.

[*Turning with one hand free towards* SIR HORACE.

And does Sir Hoace too

Give his consent.

SIR H. (*taking her hand*). Most heartily I do.

*Curtain.*

Poems.





## THE LADY AND THE KNIGHT.

THERE lives, in one of England's halls,  
A soldier brave and bold ;  
Whose fame in warlike deeds recalls  
The gallant knights of old.

'TWAS on a well remembered night  
That, on his faithful steed,  
He rode beneath the pale moonlight,  
O'er furrowed land and mead.

He seemed as striving to forget  
Some deep and new-born pain ;  
And came towards the rivulet  
That bounds his proud domain.

And legends tell that, oft at night,  
There rises from the brook  
A lady robed in spotless white,  
With pale and ghostly look.

That night he checked his random speed  
Before the fatal stream ;  
The phantom rose before his steed,  
Still as a noiseless dream.

Her form was most divinely fair,  
But not with earthly grace ;  
Unbound and wild her raven hair  
Fell round her pallid face.

The firs all black against the sky  
In wild confusion meet ;  
The brook below rushed swiftly by  
And plashed around her feet.

She heeded not, nor moved, nor spoke,  
Only that now and then,  
From her blanched lips a murmur broke  
Unlike the words of men.

He was a warrior tried in fight,  
Of warrior parents born ;  
His broad brow darkened at the sight,  
And curled his lip with scorn.

The knight laughed loud ; his good sword shone  
All moon-lit fierce and bright ;  
His voice rose clear in deep firm tone  
Above the silent night.

“ Say, fool, by what mad impulse led,  
Thou play’st this knavish part ;  
Ere yon fair stream grow flecked with red,  
With life blood from your heart.”

Then anger flashed from his stern eyes ;  
The lady knelt to pray :  
And kinder thoughts began to rise,  
And chased his rage away.

And deeply he was moved to see  
Her there so sad and lorn ;  
And pity came, and sympathy,  
And took the place of scorn.

“ Or has some false one dared to slight  
A form so fair as thine ?  
In your good cause, true maid, I'll fight,  
And make the quarrel mine.

“ No need to fear to trust to me  
E'en secrets deep as thine :  
I know the laws of chivalry,  
And hold them half divine.”

On all there fell a silence dread,  
As when with bated breath,  
Friends stand around a dying bed,  
And wait th' approach of death.

Then swiftly rose she to her feet ;  
One searching glance was thrown  
To where the earth and heaven meet  
In horizontal zone.

Alone they were; he proud and strong,  
And she—she seemed so weak;  
She looked with piercing gaze and long,  
And moved her lips to speak.

She spoke in stern yet tender tone;  
'Twas like the voice of one  
To give command who long has known,  
And see her bidding done.

“Perchance it suiteth well to vaunt  
When men with mortals fight;  
Your proud disdain can nothing daunt,  
Can nought avail to-night.

“Oh! worthy was the deed, I trow,  
Of all thy knightly zeal,  
To match against a helpless foe  
Thy proud unconquered steel.

“Yet thus thou canst not rouse my fears,  
Thy threats are all in vain;  
Who has been dead a hundred years  
Fears not to die again!

“Nay, do not marvel, brave Sir Knight;  
I vow that even you,  
Ere yon pale moon be lost to sight,  
Shall deem my story true.”

The knight looked wild, as one just freed  
From weird delirious dream ;  
With blood red spur he urged his steed  
To gallop through the stream.

The strange form stood as one who knows  
The issue long before,  
When near him fight two bitter foes  
In combat fierce and sore.

The foaming steed grew icy cold,  
And wildly pawed the sod,  
As Balaam's ass stood once of old  
Before the sword of God.

Then e'en the warrior's face grew pale ;  
Yet moved him this the more,  
That now he felt his courage fail  
That ne'er had failed before.

The lady stood unmoved the while  
Amid the murm'ring rill ;  
She smiled one withering scornful smile,  
And then laughed long and shrill.

“ So, so, Sir Knight, to blanch with fright  
Were worthy of the man,  
Who fought the foremost in the fight  
At storied Inkerman.

“Such fear becomes the scion well  
Of that brave chief and true,  
Who erst, for home and honour, fell  
At glorious Waterloo.”

When she began the tale to trace  
Of his loved father's fame,  
With hideous rage grew wild his face,  
His colour went and came.

“Oh! cruel fair, thy nature tell,  
Did woman give thee birth?  
Or com'st from deepest caves of hell  
To mar the peace of earth?”

“If thou art aught of human name,  
By all to both that's dear,  
Oh! tell me whence this power came,  
And what thy errand here.

“But if thou com'st the long pledged slave,  
In form that's all too fair,  
Of realms condemned beyond the grave,  
And all the powers there.

“Then, though thou wert the bride of him  
Who rules those regions fell,  
Yet I will tear thee limb from limb,  
And scorn thee, Queen of Hell.

“The flesh around thine heart that grows,  
The birds shall rend away ;  
Or vanquished death mine eyes shall close  
Thy victim and thy prey.”

Then rage convulsed his every limb,  
And angry gleamed his eye ;  
And once again she looked at him,  
Again she made reply.

Like whispers from a woodland dale,  
Her voice in music spread ;  
And shamed the very nightingale  
That lingered over-head.

“Though haply I with scorn can thrill  
E’en hearts as brave as thine,  
Yet here to-night, if heaven will,  
A holier task is mine.”

He looked at her, and met again  
That strange and witching eye ;  
It had a power it were vain  
For mortal to defy.

The knight leapt lightly to the ground,  
And why he could not tell,  
But, by some unknown power bound,  
Before the lady fell.

But at her whispered, stern command,  
The knight began to rise ;  
And as he knelt, she took his hand,  
And gazed into his eyes ;

Then said, " By all the woes, I swear,  
Thy blighted life that throng,  
By all the love you bore to Clare,  
I will not do thee wrong."

And at her wondrous touch a thrill  
Ran wildly through his frame,  
And stranger grew and wilder still  
At sound of Clara's name.

" Well know I how your Clare you won,  
And all the vows she gave,  
When England called each patriot son  
To fight among the brave ;

" And how, when fighting with your men,  
Her image often rose ;  
And how you fought the fiercer then,  
And faster fell the foes.

" And how, when wounded, far apart,  
Once on the field you lay,  
You pressed her picture to your heart,  
And brushed a tear away.



“ And how you thought that nought could be  
    To mar your happy life,  
When victory after victory  
    Had ended all the strife.

“ I saw you in sweet rev’ry bound,  
    To yon proud towers ride ;  
And all your anguish when you found  
    Your Clare another’s bride.

“ I know how hard it is to bear  
    With none to solace by ;  
I know how in your blank despair  
    You only long to die.

“ I once was mortal, brave Sir Knight,  
    As thou art mortal now ;  
But now I live in realms of light,  
    And watch o’er such as thou.

“ And while I lived I owned the sway  
    Of love’s remorseless spell ;  
And saw him, faithless, turn away,  
    Who vowed to love me well.

“ And oh ! the woe that came, and fears,  
    Until, in fervent prayer,  
Full long and oft I knelt in tears,  
    And prayed for strength to bear.

“ Then I had strength and joy so bright  
As ne'er I'd known before ;  
And so I come to tell to night  
Of mercy's boundless store.

“ Toil on, and trust to Him alone  
Who can thy anguish see ;  
And all the bliss, that I have known,  
Shall surely come to thee.

“ I, while on earth, was 'whelmed with woe,  
And anguish and despair ;  
Where now I live no grief we know,  
And he I loved is there.”

The moon shone clearly all the while,  
The night-wind murmured by ;  
And with a sweet and saintly smile  
She pointed to the sky.

“ Oh ! noble Knight, I tell you true.  
Oh ! think on all I say—  
There still is much you have to do  
Before your dying day.

“ The wrong avenge, maintain the right,  
And trust to God in all ;  
Then if you perish in the fight,  
'Twere glory so to fall.”

Then softly, and with loving hands  
She soothed his fevered brow ;  
“ I must away to other lands,  
May heaven help thee now.”

She said, and ere the knight could move  
Or stay the vision fair,  
Her form had gone to realms above,  
And left him lonely there.

\* \* \* \*

“ To arms, to arms,” through all the land  
Outrang the sudden call ;  
Forth went a soldier, sword in hand,  
To conquer or to fall.

Yet ere he went, one summer's day  
On his good steed he rode  
To where, in mansion proud and gay,  
His lovèd Clare abode.

“ Oh if,” said he, “ when far from you,  
Beyond the surging tide,  
I fight as soldier brave and true,  
Say, will you be my bride.”

“ Oh ! I will be thine own true bride,  
As true as true can be ;  
And e'en though mighty seas divide,  
I'll only think of thee.”

\* \* \* \* \*

All England rang with his fair fame,  
And praised his courage there ;  
Along the same old road he came,  
To claim his plighted Clare.

And as the village came in sight,  
Where Clara's father dwells,  
The music fell as soft as night  
Of distant village bells.

He met a yeoman by the way,  
"What mean those bells so fair."  
"To-day, sir, is the wedding day  
Of lovely Lady Clare."

The warrior spurred his eager steed,  
Cast back one long, last look ;  
And homeward rode with reckless speed  
Across the fatal brook.

That night his sister dreamt a dream  
That he in war was slain ;  
Next morn he lay beside the stream,  
And fever crazed his brain.

And then she watched him long and well,  
Her warrior brother bold ;  
And from his fevered lips there fell  
The story I have told.

## TO WINTER.

COME, sullen Winter, with thy cheerless train,  
That came with thee in ages past,  
And will as long as time shall last,  
Of blasting cold, and sleet, and snow, and rain.  
But oh ! have pity for  
The sick, and old, and poor,  
Who try to brave thy onslaught all in vain.

Come soon, for with thee, come the sad sweet days,  
When, in the long still twilight hour  
That has so strange and deep a power,  
Friends meet to throng around the fire's blaze  
—Their only light its glow—  
And for a time to throw  
Aside the veil that hides the heart's dark ways.

If ever in our life of seeming—then  
We see our nature's better part,  
And heart unfettered speaks to heart,  
And man holds commune with his fellow-men ;  
The grief or joy of one  
Is never his alone,  
Love makes it live in every heart again.

Sweet then to tell the woes the past that blight,  
And feel them soothed by sympathy  
Of friendship and sincerity.  
To tell the hopes that make the future bright,  
And know that true hearts near  
Will hold our welfare dear,  
And cheer and aid us in our life-long fight.

Sweet to look backward to the distant past  
And think of friends of olden times,  
Now scattered wide in distant climes,  
And what they talked of when we saw them last ;  
And then in thought to stray  
To their homes far away,  
Wherever fate their varying lot has cast.

Sweeter to look onward through the years  
That rise like mists upon the wave  
Between the present and the grave,  
And see no more earth's dreary doubts and fears,  
But that bright sunlit sea,  
The calm futurity,  
Where partings are no more, and no more tears.

## THE PENITENT.

ALONE amid the silent night  
The care-worn wanderer stood ;  
The rising moon shone softly bright  
Above the tranquil wood.  
Only the sound of dew that fell  
From brambles waked from sleep,  
Or falling leaves did break the spell  
Of midnight stillness deep.

His look was wild, and many a trace  
There was of coward fears ;  
And all his sad and haggard face  
Was wet with burning tears.  
He seemed as though in days long past  
He had been fair to see ;  
But beauty all too frail to last  
Had failed in misery.

He gazed into the silent sky,  
And flushed his cheeks with shame ;  
He moaned amidst his agony,  
And tears of anguish came.  
He meekly bowed his aching head  
With toil and sorrow spent ;  
And from his burdened heart he said,  
“ Forgive me, I repent.”

His lips could frame no other word,  
    But still he seemed to pray ;  
And well he knew that Heaven heard  
    The prayer he could not say.  
Beyond, where still so brightly shone  
    The stars all calm and fair,  
He knew his fervent thoughts had gone,  
    And were recorded there.



## AN OLD MAN'S RETROSPECT.

WHEN I am lone and far from men,  
I love to set my fancy free ;  
To live in thought the past again,  
The happy times that used to be.

Sometimes upon the village green  
I play, a boy with happy boys,  
And mingling in the mirthful scene  
Rejoice in all their simple joys.

And oft I linger in the dell,  
Where first I breathed a lover's vow,  
And kiss the lips that blush to tell  
The love they ne'er confessed till now.

Then after happy wedded years  
Again I see my darling die ;  
I soothe away her parting fears,  
And listen to her last good-bye.

And then I hear the marriage bell,  
That late rang out so sweet and free,  
Turn softly to a funeral knell,  
And trust it soon may toll for me.

## THE MISTLETOE BOUGH.

AT Christmas time, when the merry chime  
From every peal is rung,  
And every hall, both great and small,  
With holly and ivy's hung ;  
Our custom old bids all lads bold  
—And lassies the custom allow—  
And when nobody's nigh, with a maiden to hie  
Under the mistletoe bough.

Now it chanced one day that a gallant gay  
Roamed there with a maiden fair,  
And he loved her so that in accents low  
His passion he did declare ;  
But the maiden coy, she blushed for joy,  
Nor words could she answer now ;  
But she just did this, she gave him a kiss  
Under the mistletoe bough.

But sad to say, on the very next day  
Another fair lassie he saw ;  
And their steps they did trace to the very same place,  
And he did as he'd done before ;  
And lingering so, he little did know,  
That with sorrow and shame on her brow,  
A maiden fair stood watching them there,  
Under the mistletoe bough.

You've guessed, I ween, by whom they were seen,  
The lady who thought him so true,  
And he could tell she had seen them as well,  
So distant, so changed she grew.  
So his face flushed red as he faltering said,  
"Forgive me, my darling, I vow  
I did it because I conform to the laws  
Of the time-honoured mistletoe bough."

When no she replied, as he knelt at her side,  
And begged her to be his wife,  
"Ne'er thought I," said he, "so faithless you'd be  
When you promised to share my life."  
"Nay, I know not, good sir, how you that could infer,"  
She answered, "that even I vow  
I kissed you because I conform to the laws  
Of the time-honoured mistletoe bough."

## HOPE.

ALTHOUGH our life has oft of old  
    Been called a desert waste and drear,  
In which unhappy men have told  
    There are no fair oases near ;  
Theirs was of life a partial view,  
    They scanned, but ne'er surveyed the scene ;  
For wandering on the desert through,  
    With course unchequered and serene,  
  
There flows a stream with ripple gay,  
    Of which who drinks may soothe his cares ;  
'Tis e'er beside the wanderer's way,  
    And Hope's the name the streamlet bears.  
Perchance 'tis true the mounds of woe  
    That often rise its banks beside,  
May here and there obscure its flow,  
    But still the stream they ne'er can hide.  
  
Through all the dreary desert way,  
    Where naught around beside is fair ;  
Through cheerless night and cheery day  
    The stream is still meandering there.  
And so it wends its course along,  
    Like other streams to join its sea,  
Until its trace is lost among  
    The oceans of eternity.

## SONG.

OH ! Mother darling ! is it true ?  
And must I die to-day ?  
Oh come, as oft you used to do,  
And teach me how to pray.

I hear the birds in yonder dell,  
I see the clear blue sky ;  
And I have loved them all so well,  
It's very hard to die.

Oh ! Mother darling ! Mother dear,  
I cannot see thee now ;  
All around is dark and drear,  
Oh ! where ? oh where art thou ?

Say, what is that so fair I see,  
Far, far beyond the sky ?  
Oh ! Mother, do not weep for me,  
It's very sweet to die.

## SONG.

ONCE I saw him, he was weeping,  
And he seemed so strong and brave ;  
He his lonely watch was keeping,  
By his darling Mother's grave.  
At his side there stood a maiden,  
Shared with him his anguish sore,  
Wept that he was sorrow-laden,  
But for it loved her lover more.

Once I saw him, he was weeping,  
Worn with watching by his boy,  
On his breast his wife was sleeping,  
And his tears were tears of joy ;  
She woke and heard him earnest calling  
To Him who did their boy restore ;  
She saw the tears that fast were falling,  
And for them loved her lord the more.

## THE SQUIRE'S HEIR.

HE came to our village, three years ago,  
A bright happy boy, with a noble name ;  
The rich and the poor, the high and the low  
Honoured and loved him as soon as he came.

Young Roland was handsome and fair and tall,  
Had never known sorrow or dreamt of fears ;  
And he came to stay at the dear old Hall,  
With the Squire we'd loved these forty years.

And, only three months before, we had laid  
The old Squire's son in the cruel grave ;  
So Roland would be the heir, they said,  
Of the Hall and all its acres brave.

The Squire had little in all his life  
Sought for the fame of the proud and great ;  
He never had mingled in party strife,  
The quarrels of men or affairs of state.

Yet many a time, as his tenants well knew,  
When petty feuds had grown fierce and strong,  
He found, with a judgment sound and true,  
Some kindly way to adjust the wrong.

When seasons were bad, and the niggard land  
The cost of tillage would scarce repay,  
He ever was ready with generous hand  
To keep distress and trouble away.

And Roland was welcomed wherever he went,  
In cottage and mansion free to roam ;  
And many a happy hour he spent  
As he cheered the labourer's lowly home.

He was first with the hounds, first with his gun,  
For dearly he loved the sportman's joys,  
And first in the summer when work was done  
To lead the games of the gay village boys.

And he won the heart of a trusting maid,  
An innocent maiden of beauty rare ;  
She was ever in simplest robes arrayed,  
And the winds made sport with her bonny brown  
hair.

And she was the vicar's darling child ;  
Her mother had died long years ago ;  
His widowed life she had well beguiled,  
His pleasures had shared, and shared his woe.

She tended at morning to all his needs  
With a thrifty housewife's busy care ;  
Her leisure was filled with kindly deeds  
Where trouble and want and sickness were.



At eve she would sit at her father's knee,  
As they talked of things that to both were dear,  
The bright happy days that used to be ;  
Or she read from the books he loved to hear.

And oft when there came some dear old friend,  
Out of the parish he cared for so well,  
In talk of old times an hour to spend,  
To look for counsel, or troubles to tell ;

Then alone she would wander far away,  
And down to the blossoming meadows ran,  
Where once as a child she had come to play,  
Ere ever the troubles of life began.

One fair summer eve in the late July,  
As she wove for her fancy a sweet day-dream,  
It chanced that Roland came wandering by,  
As she stood by the style at the running stream.

And he told his love as a man should tell,  
She listened, and turned her face away ;  
But the light in her eyes told all too well,  
More than a thousand words could say.

He gathered a rose that grew hard by,  
Wreathed it with fern and anemone fair ;  
And a rush from the stream the flowers to tie,  
And plaited them all in her bonny brown hair.

\* \* \* \* \*

Hè went from our village two years ago ;  
 “ For he must know more of the world,” they said ;  
 But old men gathering whispered low,  
 “ ’Twere better he’d stayed with the squire instead.”

Wherever he went the rich and the great  
 Received him, and flattered by common consent ;  
 They knew him the heir to large estate,  
 And so he was courted wherever he went.

And the whirl of pleasure his heart bereft  
 Of the simpler joys that he used to know ;  
 Little he thought of the village he’d left,  
 Or the trusting maiden who loved him so.

One still fair eve in the sweet summer tide,  
 He rode through the fields all golden with corn ;  
 A beautiful woman rode at his side,  
 Of a proud and ancient lineage born.

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*

He stood at the altar a year ago,  
 And the same proud woman was with him there ;  
 And never at altar stood, I trow,  
 A comelier man or a maid more fair.

The tones of the organ died softly away,  
 The windows let in the crimsoned light ;  
 And never, I ween, for many a day,  
 Had shone the sun on a fairer sight.

The old bishop's voice rang soft and clear,  
As he the glorious ritual read ;  
But the bridegroom shook with a sudden fear,  
His quivering lips turned pale as the dead.

The question came, and the church was still—  
“Wilt love her and keep, all other forsake?”  
And all were waiting to hear “I will,”  
But answer none did the bridegroom make.

For he seemed to see a form at his side,  
A sweet village maiden, guileless and fair ;  
Standing between himself and his bride,  
A wild red rose in her bonny brown hair.

But it passed in a moment ; all was well,  
And they were wedded for woe or for weal ;  
The service was ended, and many a bell  
Rang out to the winds the gay marriage peal.

\* \* \* \* \*

A weary change o'er the village had crept,  
For tidings of Roland had come to them all.  
In the churchyard now the old squire slept,  
And nobody lived in the dreary hall.

The vicar was lone and broken-hearted,  
For his child had gone, and no one knew where ;  
They only knew from her home she had started  
One night in a fever of dark despair.

Little thought Roland of hearts that were broken,  
In his new world with his beautiful wife ;  
Never a word of the past was spoken ;  
All was forgot in the pleasure of life.

\* \* \* \* \*

He rode in his carriage but yesterday ;  
It stopped at his great grand house in the square ;  
A beggar came slowly from over the way,  
A wan, worn maid with bonny brown hair.

She took from her bosom a faded rose,  
And threw on the steps at the lady's feet ;  
She saw the great door behind them close,  
And fell with a cry in the dreary street.

In the hospital ward, at still of night,  
Nameless, unknown, the maiden lay ;  
And never those eyes, that were once so bright,  
Shall look again on the dawn of day.

And at Roland's house in the lordly square,  
Youth and beauty, a heedless throng,  
Were whiling the night, all free from care,  
With mirth and laughter, dance and song.

And after them all there came a guest,  
"I found on your steps a rose," said he ;  
"Fair hostess," he laughed in careless jest,  
"A gallant should proffer the gift to thee."

“Some luckless lover has treasured it long,  
And kept as a token of past delight,  
For true love’s sake I’ll wear it among  
The flowers,” she said, “I wear to-night.”

So he stepped to her side with a dainty air,  
“Wild rose was never so honoured till now,”  
Said he ; and plaited with careless care  
The rose with the blossoms that wreathed her brow.

But a wild cry of anguish startled them all,  
As they turned to where Roland was standing by,  
And saw him suddenly stagger and fall,  
With the glaze of death on his fear-stricken eye.

From the hospital ward that moment arose  
The maiden’s last moan in the silent room ;  
And lips that were true were echoing those  
That with lover’s untruth had sealed her doom.

## TO MY MOTHER

ON HER SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY.

'Tis in the evening of the day,  
When all its toil and labours cease,  
When stars shine down with gentle ray,  
That Nature seems the most at peace ;

So in the years that still remain,  
The evening of a life well spent,  
May you know nothing of the pain  
Of mid-day toil and discontent.

And when, I trust in far-off time,  
The evening darkens into night,  
May He who makes the stars to shine,  
Still lead you with His kindly light.

And as the shades of midnight here  
Still vanish with the coming morn ;  
So may life's shadows disappear  
In splendours of the perfect dawn.

TO OLD MAIDS.

AND who, I wonder, was the soulless churl,  
Who first invented the hard phrase, "old maid."

I envy not who thinks the happy girl,  
In loneliness grown old, and still arrayed

In maiden purity, is fitting theme  
For cruel scoffing or for careless jest.

And if sometimes a sad yet cherished dream  
Of plighted faith and broken vows molest

Your solitude ; if sometimes wistful eyes  
Grow dim with tears at thoughts of long ago ;

Yet there are friends no chance can change, who prize  
Your love among the dearest joys they know ;

To many a home that your bright lives have blest  
Comes no more valued or more welcome guest.

## TO G \* \* \* \* \* C \* \* \*.

*On the occasion of his starting to Australia and New Zealand,  
being ordered a sea voyage.*

A HAPPY voyage ! and may a prosperous gale,  
As you to far off lands pursue your way,  
Your path direct and stretch the fleecy sail !  
And while in England, the dull cheerless day  
Is cold and darkened, and the wintry time  
With sullen grace its scanty sunshine deigns,  
May kinder skies and a more genial clime  
Send health and vigour coursing through your veins.  
Yet shall old England, when her winter's o'er,  
And the new year in Spring's bright promise lives,  
Give you such welcome as you near her shore,  
As England only to her true sons gives.  
To English hearts fate no such winter sends,  
But turns to summer when we greet our friends.



## TO E \* \* \* \* C \* \* \*.

*On the occasion of her starting to Australia and New Zealand  
in company with her brother, who was ordered a sea voyage.*

Go! God be with thee,—and a safe return,—  
True sister, on your love-directed way!  
And if in lonelier moments you should yearn  
For friends far off; and thoughts unbidden stray,  
Amid the solitude of silent seas,  
To days remembered in your English home;  
Then shall the mystic murmur of the breeze  
Take shape in words, and answer make, “I come  
From crowded streets to thee, or meadow fair;  
And when I last caught up the voice of man  
Thy name was gently spoken, and a prayer  
For thee and thine straight up to Heaven ran.”  
As stars beyond our vision night and day  
Look down on us, our thoughts shall watch thy way.

## TO KING HUMBERT OF ITALY.

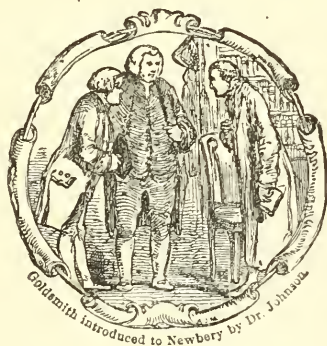
*Who in the Summer of 1884 personally visited the Hospital  
Wards in Venice in which the cholera patients were collected.*

HUMBERT, for thy afflicted land, and thee,  
For sorrowing Italy, and her patriot king  
    Serene, in midst of panic, sympathy  
From every nation far and wide doth spring.  
    Not from the battlefield in din of war,  
Where hungry death doth his red banquet spread ;  
    Not from the lonely solitudes afar,  
Where men, undaunted, by high duty led,  
    In ceaseless peril to wild hordes proclaim  
The peace and joy from God's great love that flow,  
    Ever a worthier, nobler record came  
Than thy devotion to thy people's woe.  
    With kings like thee, thy country ne'er shall shame  
    The splendid annals of her ancient fame.

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# CONTENTS.

---

BOOKS OF TRAVEL	3
HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY	4, 5
STANESBY'S ILLUMINATED BOOKS	6
USEFUL KNOWLEDGE AND ENTERTAINING ANECDOTE	6, 7, 8
HANDBOOKS FOR THE HOUSEHOLD	8, 9
FICTION, &c.	9, 10
POETRY AND BELLES-LETTRES	11, 12
BIRTHDAY AND ANNIVERSARY BOOKS	12, 13
DEVOTIONAL AND RELIGIOUS BOOKS	13, 14, 15, 16, 17
AMERICAN SERMONS AND THEOLOGICAL BOOKS	18, 19
EDUCATIONAL BOOKS	20
Darnell's Copy Books.	
History and Geography.	
Geographical Readers.	
Grammar, &c.	
Arithmetic, Algebra and Geometry.	
Elementary French and German.	
Needlework Manuals and Appliances.	
MISCELLANEOUS BOOKS...	28, 29, 30
WORKS FOR DISTRIBUTION	30, 31

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